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## **THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS**



*by the same author*

FRANCE IN FERMENT (London: Jarrolds, 1934)

THE DESTINY OF FRANCE (London: Hamish Hamilton  
1937)

FRANCE AND MUNICH (London: Hamish Hamilton  
1939)

# THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*A journalist's Diary*  
by  
ALEXANDER WERTH

"C'est embêtant, dit Dieu, quand il n'y aura plus  
ces Français.  
Il y a des choses que je fais, il n'y aura plus  
personne pour les comprendre."  
Charles Péguy.



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**To Uncle Peter  
and the others who stayed behind**



## CONTENTS

PART I. THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS	13
PART II. EXODUS	149
PART III. EPILOGUE:	
I. THE SEEDS OF VICHY	217
II. VICHY	261



## PREFACE

THIS is not a book of high politics. The defeat of France, and the destruction by Nazi Germany of the greatest independent civilization on the Continent of Europe constitute so immense a disaster that the full extent of it cannot yet be measured, nor even understood. France as one of the great units of European civilization can now be resurrected only if Great Britain wins the war. Otherwise, England, like France, will be swallowed up in the black abyss, in the new Dark Ages of suffering, human degradation and compulsory stupidity—the New Order, as Hitler and Mussolini call it.

Most of this book is a personal diary written during the last days of the France we all knew and loved. It has all the faults, and, I hope, a few of the merits of other diaries. It does not deal with the military collapse of France, but only with the manner in which Paris reacted to it. Perhaps the one point to recommend the diary is its genuineness. On May 10th I did feel the immensity of the moment and proceeded to jot down day by day what I saw in Paris. The final outcome of France's resistance became only too apparent to me soon after the invasion of the Low Countries, and especially after the break-through on the Meuse on May 15th.



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Some of the personal and semi-personal matter may appear irrelevant. But in a diary even irrelevancies form part of the background—for instance, what people used to eat in restaurants in the last days of Paris. I hope I shall never live through another month like it again. While one carried on with one's day-to-day routine, one felt during every moment of the day, that doom was descending upon Paris and the French people. And one felt the infinite pity of it all.

Perhaps the chief culprit in the writing of this diary was the French press censorship. Before the war I used to tell my paper everything that mattered. The censorship put an end to all journalistic candour. A diary helps one to let off steam.

The "diary" proper was written day by day. I made no subsequent alterations in it, except that I strung some of the sentences more coherently together and added, here and there, a few explanatory words. I was also obliged to change a few of the names, but mostly of people who are of no public interest. In the first part a few passages will be found, entitled "retrospect." These were later incorporated in the diary for the sake of clarity. The story of the exodus was written in fits and starts—partly at Tours, partly at Bordeaux, but chiefly on board the *Madura* which brought us back to England. The epilogue is an attempt to assess briefly the reasons for France's surrender, and its immediate consequences.

A. W.

*London,*

*September, 1940.*

**PART I**

**THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS**



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Friday, 10th May.*

Now it has really started. I was still asleep at 8.30 in my room on the Quai Voltaire when the 'phone rang. It was Gilbert. "The Boches invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg at 4 o'clock this morning. Little news item which I thought might interest you. You can now go and buy yourself a pair of concrete-lined pyjamas." So that was that. There had been rumours, every fortnight or so, of a possible invasion of the Low Countries. But there hadn't been any for a while. Last week I saw Sandberg of *Het Volk*, the Socialist paper of Amsterdam. He had just come back from Holland. Although the Fifth Column was very active—both his brother and his father were Nazis and thought a Nazi invasion could alone give them a quiet life in which business could be done again—he was satisfied that the Germans would not attack Holland until July or August. Now it has come; perhaps when we least expected it—we certainly expected it less than at many other moments during the past eight months.

Hitler certainly chose his moment well. All this week we've been breaking our heads not over Holland, but over the fiasco in Norway, and about the infernal Government mess in London; and yesterday's Cabinet meeting in Paris seems to have been a very stormy one. Apparently Reynaud demanded the dismissal

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of Gamelin, who had made blunder after blunder over Norway; while Daladier, who is Gamelin's protector, wouldn't hear of it, and threatened to create a Cabinet crisis. Daladier broke his neck over Finland; perhaps he hoped Reynaud would break his over Norway. Let's see what they'll do to-day with even graver issues than Norway before them. Further, all this week we had been expecting Italy to do things—to invade Greece from Albania. Several armoured divisions in Albania were waiting for the signal, we were told. I even wrote a facetious piece the other day about the pleasant vales of Thessaly through which the tanks would run one of these days all the way to Salonica. It may come; but that's no longer the real problem now.

The point is that the real war has now started. *Finie cette drôle de guerre*, the "phoney" war. The American newspapers will be pleased: they'll have something to write about; gee, they'll be filing stories; they'll be able to wallow in blood. Mr. Kennedy, United States Ambassador in London, will perhaps realize now "what this war is all about." Good-bye to the peaceful life of these eight months of the phoney war.

## RETROSPECT<sup>1</sup>

All these eight months in Paris you would hardly, on the face of it, have thought that there was a war on at all—except, of course, that nearly all the men you knew had been called up. The *Chevaux de Marly*

<sup>1</sup> Added a few days later to the Diary.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

in the Place de la Concorde and the base of the Obelisk were sandbagged (it gave the obelisk an even more phallic look than usual), and also the *Marseillaise* at the Arc de Triomphe and Carpeaux's *Danse* at the Opéra. And opposite the Opéra, next door to the office, in the rue Halévy, they sold some kind of tarred paper vest "to keep our soldiers warm." (They needed it, poor devils, during those horrible winter months.) And at Lancel's there were terracotta Aberdeen terriers raising a hind leg over a copy of *Mein Kampf*. Wonder if anybody ever bought one? But apart from little things like that there was, on the face of it, little in Paris to remind you of the war. *Timeses* and *Telegraphs* and *Expresses*—true, a day late; but you can't expect everything in wartime—were displayed on the kiosks; and the Café de la Paix was always packed with German émigrés and all sorts of people; and compared with London, the black-out was quite harmless at night. The papers were full of official optimism, and victory was taken for granted; and the Germans, we were told, would starve sooner or later.

Especially since November, life in Paris became quite normal. Theatres and *dancings* and music halls were open. The *Ondine* of Giraudoux (now High Commissioner for Propaganda) was having a great run; and there was a new Baty production of *Phèdre* at the Théâtre Montparnasse, and a revival of *Maya*; and M. Henri Bernstein wrote a play called *Elvire*, with Elvire Popesco in the title rôle, which was a huge success. It was about an Austrian émigrée (a princess or countess, of course) and the *Canard*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Enchaîné* said: "Now, that'll learn Hitler!" And at the Comédie Française there were revivals of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and of Sardou's *Madame Sans Gêne*, one aristocratically heroic, the other democratically heroic, and both great successes, though the *Cyrano* was anything but a Coquelin. Still, the unsophisticated public of the Comédie Française still loves *Cyrano*, and its familiar sonorous lines, and it used to clap its hands sore after the duel scene and after the

Molière a du génie et Christian était beau.

Well, well; how many more performances of *Cyrano* are we going to have in Paris? And at the Opéra Comique last week I took old Peter to a really good show of *La Traviata*; and old Peter, remembering, no doubt, the good old times in Holy Russia, sniffed with emotion almost right through the second act, and in the interval in the foyer he sang little bits in Italian. . . . And Christmas 1939 was just grand. Turkey and oysters and *foie gras* and champagne—no limit to it. I went twice to Lucienne Boyer's *boîte* in the rue Volney. Lots of young men in uniform, and young women, drinking champagne, and also fat bald podgy people—new war profiteers, what? And how they all enjoyed in an emotional escapist kind of way the pungent, cruel, sweet songs of *notre Lucienne nationale*. It was down beside the Chatham in the rue Volney, in a hall decorated in nursery colours—pinks, and pale blues and whites, and with little plaster cherubs on the wall behind the platform. And to the accompaniment of a Hebrew

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

fiddler, Lucienne would sing, wearing her midnight blue gown, perched on the tail of the grand piano. Gosh, she had personality, Lucienne; and a lovely voice—especially when in the tougher songs it got a bit raucous and contralto-like—

Parti sans laisser d'adresse,  
Parti avec mon amour,  
Parti avec ma tendresse,  
Parti pour toujours.

A great hit. And also that other favourite which brought tears into the eyes of the champagne-sipping couples—

Dans tes bras je me sens si petite,  
Si petite auprès de toi. . . .

a banal waltz tune: but what a pretty emotional thing Lucienne made of it! There were also Maurice Chevalier and Josephine Baker at the Casino de Paris; but they're not in the same class; and Maurice was rather silly with his advertising stunt of taking a dilapidated old car to the scrap iron dump, and making a speech to it: "*Adieu, Clémentine, adieu.* You were the first car I ever owned. Now you must serve your country, old girl." Silly. The evening papers made a great fuss about it.

Not for everybody—Oh God! no, (you only had to go, as I did, to Louise Weiss's canteen for down-and-out old women in the rue Lepic in Montmartre and to inquire into the state of many trades which had been completely knocked out by the war)—but for a lot of people life was nice and simple in Paris all these months. The Front—well, the Front was



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

far away; and even *the soldiers had almost forgotten that war was a dangerous game*. I hope they aren't too overwhelmed by it now that they are going to get the real stuff.

. . . . .

Without waiting for breakfast I went into the hall downstairs. Madame looked distressed. Her son was in the army, somewhere in the North, she thought. It was a hot sunny morning outside. I took the AA bus at the Pont du Louvre to the office near the Place de l'Opéra. The streets seemed more crowded than usual. Outside the Galeries Lafayette at the bargain counters, women were still buying slippers and overalls; it seemed queer. There had been a two hours' *alerte* early in the morning—I had slept right through it, though the gunfire seems to have been pretty terrific. Perhaps that's why people didn't look so surprised at the outbreak of the real war.

On many faces there is a grim determined look, though most of the women look upset. So at last France is being attacked. It would seem that there is no longer any room for arguing in terms of pros and cons, as there was in case the of Norway, Poland, etc.

At 10 o'clock I arrive at the office. No news. The wireless is dead. I look at the Agence Radio news sheets: "Parachutists in Dutch uniforms." "German Government's note declaring its intention to protect Belgian and Dutch neutrality." There are no details. I go out to buy *Paris-Midi*. It is no

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

better. I then take a bus up to the Gare du Nord to see what's happening. There are crowds in the streets. I am surprised to see that there are still a great many children about, especially in the garden in the Square Lafayette. There's even a woman with a tiny baby. The traffic is terrific—what a waste of petrol, it occurs to me. I buy another *Paris-Midi*, with stop-press news: "*La Belgique et la Hollande résistent à l'envahisseur.*" Did anybody doubt it? Well, perhaps. At the Gare du Nord a notice board catches my eye: "*Mobilisés Belges: guichets 28 et 29.*" I go there: and find a number of 'chaps standing about, with piles of luggage around them. I talk to a Belgian workman, a young lad with a rather stupidly aggressive face and a strong Flemish accent. He is depressed—horribly so. "Belgium," he says, "will be overrun in three days." Does he think Germany invincible? "*Ils sont plus forts qu'en 1914,*" he says. He is terribly worried about Brussels, which, he says, was bombed twice this morning. "I don't know where we're going. I was informed too late, so I missed the morning train. I'll have to wait till 1.30 now. I was told I had to take the train for Charleroi." (I don't like the name!) "They've got tremendous modern equipment," says he. "Yes, but we've got some too," I try to argue. He gives a doubtful shrug and adds he's convinced that Musso will come in against us "in two hours." After that he gets silly. "You've done nothing in eight months," he says. "France and England and Belgium and Holland should have struck at Germany when she attacked Poland." "That's all very well," I say,

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

—"but your King wouldn't even let us in." The argument gets unpleasant. "*Au revoir, bonne chance,*"—what does one say on these occasions? I walk on to the Gare de L'Est: a lot of traffic outside and lots of soldiers going off. But nothing unusual otherwise. I then take a taxi back into town.

At the Café Viel all seems normal. The waiter gives me a vermouth instead of a dubonnet. I growl. Funny to get worried about a thing like that. I am joined there by Reggie Maynard of the British Political Research League and Josiah Hogg, ex-*Daily Mail*, and now a member of the League. They tell me that Comert who has just been appointed chief Press officer for the British and American Press, has now a sumptuous new office at the Continental<sup>1</sup>—as big as this café. A banqueting hall, or something. Dear Comert, he must be happy at last. Hogg thinks the Germans are too hard up for petrol; they've got only six months' supply, he says. "We've got an *endless* amount." According to Reggie, Rotterdam was occupied this morning by German parachutists; but the Dutch inundation scheme is working fine. The Dutch know all about the German plan of invasion. Pinched it not long ago. The Belgian Army is o.k. British G.H.Q. moved into Belgium

<sup>1</sup> The enormous Hotel Continental in the rue Castiglione was commandeered at the beginning of the war and turned into the Commissariat (later the Ministry) of Information. This great government department somehow lacked the necessary austerity. The wallpaper in most of the rooms was pink and flowery, the furniture was fake Louis XV, and a private bathroom and lavatory were attached to most of the "offices." All this was the subject of many humorous—if often ill-founded—reflections and allegations.

The censorship, to which all Press messages had to be submitted, was at the Continental—hence frequent references to it in this Diary.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

this morning. The Belgians are practically mobilized. He seems cheerful. We then talk about last night's air-raid—which I completely missed. "I am at the Ritz," says Hogg. "There was a lovely parade of night-dresses there last night. Lots of women hanging out of windows—'Oh, aeroplanes!—*Regarde! Regarde!*'"

On my way to Faucon's *prix fixe* restaurant I buy a *Paris-Soir*. Pretty piece of news: several French towns bombed—Nancy, Luxeuil, Pontoise, Lille, Lyon, Colmar. The old woman at the kiosk is gloomy and perturbed. "*Nous aurons encore les Boches chez nous,*" she says. I've noticed that so long as the Germans were attacking others they were Allemands; now they've become Boches. That may be healthy; what is unhealthy is that she seemed to take the invasion for granted. At Faucon's there were three women at the next table, all of them rather worried. They talked platitudes, though one of them, a little brunette, talked to me in a kind of appealing way as though hoping I'd say something reassuring. "*Elle est magnifique la Royale Air Force, n'est-ce pas, Monsieur?*" The waitress looked worried. Her daughter, she said, was at Nancy—which had been bombed this morning.

Went to the office; found the wireless out of order, which was most annoying. Wrote a long piece to the paper; though there was really very little to say. Gilbert seemed particularly worried about the internal situation in France, about the Reynaud-Daladier row. Reynaud wants to appoint a super war council with Pétain and Weygand at the head

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of it. Daladier is still sticking to Gamelin. It's not till this evening that one learns that the difficulties were patched up, through Marin and Ybarnégaray entering the Reynaud Government. That made Daladier shut up, and the Cabinet crisis was thus averted. Only, the question of the High Command is still unsettled. There was also a lot of mysterious coming and going, especially at the Elysée. And what was Daladier seeing Bonnet for? Plotting against Reynaud; or something deeper still?

*Saturday, 11th May.*

A day of waiting and of conflicting reports. At night I learn they have managed to cross the Albert Canal.

*Sunday, 12th May.*

I went to see Duroc, one of Reynaud's right-hand men, at the Quai d'Orsay. Outside I met that old duffer with the mouldy-looking whiskers, the *syndic* of the French *presse diplomatique*. He looked very worried. "*Ils attaquent la Ligne Maginot*," he said.

When I asked Duroc how things were going: "Well—they are not going too badly for us." Not very convincingly. "First, Holland: we've been in 'phone communication with The Hague this morning. Yesterday, with the parachutists dropping all over the place, was a difficult day; but they've been mopped up now, and none more have been dropped to-day. Some are still hanging on to the outskirts of The Hague. Our (British and French) troops are now in contact with the Dutch. Our left flank has

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

advanced very rapidly. More quickly than was expected, *much* more quickly. In Holland the position's o.k."

"What about the Albert Canal?"

"Ah, that's another matter, of course. Only we never really had any faith in the Albert Canal. Still, we *did* hope the Belgians would hold up the German advance by forty-eight hours—give us more time to take up positions in Belgium. Actually, the Albert Canal had already been falling to pieces—even without German help. The very people who built it had no faith in it. The Germans captured the bridge over the Albert Canal at Maastricht with a detachment dressed up as Dutch soldiers and speaking Dutch, saying they'd been ordered to take charge of it. Our Air Force and the R.A.F. have been very busy over the Maastricht area—not without good results."

"But what's going to be the next line of retreat?"

"I don't know what the General Staff's plans are."

"Obviously you'll have to abandon Holland if there is no way of hanging on to Belgium."

"Well—that's for the General Staff to decide. They have their own plans."

He sounded rather doubtful about everything. "The Belgian Army is not a first-rate army," he said. "In Brussels the question of evacuation has arisen. We've just been 'phoning to Brussels. The population is very nervous, because of the numerous parachutists all over the place. The Belgian Government is *plutôt affolé*—and is wondering how the devil it's going to evacuate Brussels. And it'll have to be done quickly. In Belgian Luxemburg, that is, in the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Ardennes country, we have retreated according to plan. The Germans attacked us there with thirty-ton tanks. But that bit of the front isn't worrying us."

"Well, what bit is?"

"Maastricht, of course. And at 4 o'clock this morning they also started a terrific bombardment of the Forbach salient. The Forbach salient—where I spent the earlier part of this war—is, of course, in front of the Maginot Line, and we shan't try to hold it. There was heavy bombing last night and to-day in the Valenciennes and Lille areas—they've been going for troop transports but there have also been a good many civilian casualties. But, after all," said Duroc reassuringly, "if the Germans have to resort to tricks like dressing up their soldiers in foreign uniform—well, then they can't feel so very strong. It makes me confident they'll still lose the war."

"Then, of course," I said, "you've got the famous Line along the Belgian frontier, if it comes to the worst; that is, if Belgium is overrun."

"With its light field fortifications, and pill-boxes, and tank traps, and so on, it isn't, of course, as good as the Maginot Line," Duroc says, a little dismally.

"Well," I suggest, "a sort of Siegfried Line in miniature? Daladier told us all about it in December."

"Siegfried Line," says Duroc, "I wish to hell it were."

The 'phone rings. Duroc reads out to somebody a letter over the 'phone. "The General Staff protests against the tendentious tone of part of to-day's Press. . . ." He couldn't read the whole of the letter, as Reynaud rang up on another line. He jumped up

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

hurriedly. "*Le Président m'appelle*—I haven't anything more to tell you. Don't tell your colleagues."

Just as I arrived there, Rochat came in and said something about severe measures that must be taken at once against suspects—Germans, émigrés and *especially* women. "They must be interned, interned," he cried. I hadn't seen Rochat for a long time, and he greeted me with great cordiality, forgetting no doubt the trouble I had with him in the Abyssinian and Spanish days—especially when he was Laval's *chef de cabinet*. But he is a good permanent official with a chameleon soul.

There's a nice photograph in the *Œuvre* to-day of Mme Lebrun visiting the Foire de Paris and gazing dismally at some object looking like a wedding cake.

I walked from the Foreign Office along the *Quai* to the bus stop at the Chamber of Deputies. Talked to two cops standing outside. "*Ça va barder*," they said, "Don't you think so?" Funny; the last time I heard a cop utter that phrase was on this very spot on 6th February, 1934, just as the riots were about to start in earnest on the other side of the Concorde bridge, separated from this side by a cordon of police and *gardes mobiles*. It was the real beginning of France's troubles. 6 *février*—I sometimes think it's become a thing of the past; it isn't really. The cops asked me for news. I talked very discreetly; one has to be careful, especially with cops. They were particularly interested in parachutists in policemen's



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

uniforms. I thought all parachutists in bogus uniforms ought to be shot on the spot. "Awkward," said one of the cops, "in case you bump off a chap of your own." They had helmets and gasmasks slung over their shoulders and also big pistols.

Sunny and cool. The Place de la Concorde is beautiful in this weather, and all is so peaceful. There is a Sunday emptiness in the streets. Here is bus 14 at last. I say good-bye to the cops. Go to Carboni's, the Corsican restaurant at St.-Germain des Prés, where I have a lunch date with Marion. As we start on *minestrone* in comes Professor Henri Laugier of the Ministry of Education, and head of the Scientific Research Bureau. He joins us. A grand person. He asks Marion what she's doing. She tells him about her work on educational and cultural *rapprochement* between England and France; films, brochures, posters, inter-allied propaganda in schools; Mantoux's efforts at the Ministry of Information and all that. "*Mais c'est très important*," says Laugier with his tongue in his cheek. "By the way," he says, "*il faut que vous engueuliez votre Amiralité*." They should have given us mines with which we could blow up the Rhine bridges. We could drop them in the Rhine and just let them float downstream. Infra-red rays—and off they go when passing under a bridge. Nothing simpler." (Not quite clear to me—but still!)

Laugier: "I asked a friend some time ago: 'Don't you think time is working for the Allies?' 'Sure it is.' 'I think so too. And since Hitler probably agrees, he's not going to wait.' So there. I was right."

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

I asked what he thought of Gamelin.

"Gamelin to-day imagines that he is in a strong position. He wouldn't give away any troops for Syria or Finland or Norway. The battle, he said, is coming in the West. He was right. Only what he's got to do now is to win the battle."

I talked rather pessimistic stuff. "*Vous êtes défaitiste*," said Laugier. "I can get you shot."

"Rubbish. I am not defeatist; but I refuse to regard an Allied victory as axiomatic. But tell me this," I go on, "how are your lines of defence in the North? Because isn't that the most important question at the moment?"

Laugier: "I am not a *maginotiste*. I am all in favour of having a whole lot of lines. Thirty-four lines—from the Albert Canal to Biarritz. Something has already been done on this principle, but not nearly enough. And since France is going to be the battleground, it is no use having any armament works here. We must make all the stuff in Canada. I see a lot of Dautry, the Minister of Armaments. '*Je suis fatigué*,' said Dautry the other day. '*Le matin je vois des marchands de fusils. Je les engueule. Puis des marchands de canons. Je les engueule. Puis des marchands d'avions. Je les engueule. Puis des livreurs de matières premières. Je les engueule. Quelle vie!*' "

When the other night I went to the Café de Flore I ran into Picasso. Laugier, who has some marvellous Picassos in his house in the rue de Varenne, is also a great friend of his. I get him to talk about him. Picasso's dark and very jealous-looking

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

mistress, he tells us, is a very fine professional photographer; and Bullitt, the United States Ambassador, is among her latest customers. Then a few anecdotes: some of them rather banal. In his youth Picasso was very hard up. One day he went to see a successful fellow painter, V., and asked him for 150 francs to go to Spain, and offered him two pictures in return. V. gave him only 120 francs. A few years later, Picasso went to see him, and said that a collector was very anxious to have the two paintings. (He wanted them, of course, for himself.) Picasso thereupon wrote out a cheque for 100,000 francs. . . .

"Picasso has applied for French nationality," Laugier said. "He's fed up with being a Spaniard. But you know what our red-tape is like. Not long ago, I found him standing in a long queue at the Préfecture; and I had to rescue him. Do you know that Picasso is one of the very biggest taxpayers in France? Last year he paid 750,000 francs in income tax."

When later at the office I repeat Laugier's story about the thirty-four defence lines to Gilbert, he says: "Well, that'll be thirty-four days at the present rate!" We are both worried about Basil. He's in the R.A.F. and must be having a hot time, with Reims being bombed like hell. The French wireless is talking a lot of tripe; and its signal—the last bars from the *Marseillaise*, "*abreuve nos sillons*," sounds horribly funereal. All it says, in effect, is that the Belgians are in full retreat.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

I write a rather gloomy piece for the paper—probably the censorship won't pass it. Later, I write a slightly more cheerful one; largely on the strength of to-night's communiqué and of Pierlot's broadcast. The censorship is really getting worse every day. For a time, just after Reynaud became Premier, we thought it would be relaxed. But they were soon back again at their old tricks. When I look back on these last eight months, I feel I've been cheating and swindling the British public. The French begged us to write as much as possible about France and "France's war effort." But if you wrote a truthful story with all the pros and cons, the cons were blue-pencilled and the pros alone remained. The result was nothing but undiluted panegyrics. You really got to a stage where you couldn't be bothered seeing your stuff murdered like that, and you became even more complacent than you thought was good for the "Allied cause." The censors loved sanctimonious tripe, and love it still. I once pulled their leg with an idiotic eulogy of Bonnet. I talked about his straightforward manner, his great popularity in England, where people were impressed by his genial and handsome personality, and about the esteem and devotion Lord Halifax felt for him. The censors naturally passed this bilge. The censorship has caused dreadful harm to France. It has cultivated a smug complacent frame of mind, with victory taken for granted; and I doubt whether, after all this soft soap, French morale will be able to stand up to a terrific *blitzkrieg*. The papers have told us a hundred times that the Maginot Line and its "extension" are im-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

pregnable. Never has even the slightest query been allowed to appear in the Press. Well, we shall see.

I ask Gilbert what's wrong with him. He says he's all right but is worried about somebody at the front and about a cousin in Brussels.

Comert, now well established as Anglo-American Press officer at the French M. of I. after two years of "disgrace"—he was sacked by Bonnet after Munich from his post of Press chief at the Quai—rings up about the official French reply to Musso's charges about the Allied blockade. It doesn't strike me as important; though Tabouis thinks Italy may make a *casus belli* out of it.

Old Picquart, who was in the French Army in the last war, reminisces about it. He is fairly optimistic now. "They are nowhere near Brussels," he says, looking at the map. I can't make out whether they hold much of the Albert Canal, except at Maastricht. Picquart isn't quite clear about it either.

What a change since last week! Curious how last Sunday St.-Germain was packed with holiday outers. Gilbert and I went there by car; a lovely day. There wasn't a seat to be got in any restaurant either at St.-Germain or in the various *auberges* along the Seine. Outside one of them, at Bougival, there were at least fifty private cars. In the end, we had lunch in a little workmen's *bistrot* at St.-Cloud.

During the afternoon I went down to the flat downstairs—played some Chopin mazurkas, then Beethoven's Largo from No. 7; found it very *émouvant*. Apart from it and a few other slow Beethoven move-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

ments, I prefer Bach, though. He doesn't suffer from Beethoven's over-emphasis. I then have another go at the first movement of the Chopin sonata in B flat. Queer to conjure up this Louis-Philippe atmosphere in days like these. To think that the Place Vendôme has hardly changed since Chopin lived there in style, pestered by mobs of adoring and aristocratic females.

We went to the Petit Riche for dinner. Very empty. Jeanne, the large-mouthed waitress, is very depressed about her nephew in the army. "*Ça vous donne le cafard*," she says. "Makes you think of the places where the bombs *do* drop. *Et ça vous fait penser à tous ces beaux garçons. . .*" There are three people at the next table: an officer, his wife and—apparently—his father: *un petit vieux* with the Legion of Honour. Funny how I find the French *petits vieux* particularly touching these days. They talked of the R.A.F. with great admiration, also of the British Army. The officer, who had seen them pass through Angers, described their equipment as "*formidable*."

Then back to the office. Marlowe, our commissioner who's got something wrong with his stomach, has been temporarily replaced by a Mr. Putty. Mr. Putty is a typical French-bred Englishman, but I can't quite place him. He is small, wiry, like a fox-terrier, and talks English with a slightly French accent. He tells me he was a jockey at Maisons Lafitte. Asks me if I think he'd get a job as a jockey in Spain; wouldn't I ask Mr. Picquart.

I walk home down the Avenue de l'Opéra and through the Tuileries. A lovely night on the Seine.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

The black-out is the same as usual; no worse. At 12.30 there's an air-raid warning. The sirens make an infernal noise. I sit at the window. The lights on the Seine go out, except a few blue ones, one of them under the Louvre gate. A few official cars with red headlights, dash past. The river is strangely still, with the black outline of the Louvre, the dome of the Institute and—far away—Notre Dame. Then the searchlights go up—six or seven beams coming from all directions. They meet somewhere behind the house. The guns are booming in the distance. Somewhere in the east a green halo flashes up for a second—a bomb? Somewhere quite near a pair of flaming onions—like red fiery toy balloons—slowly mount up from the Seine. Beautiful, but a little uncanny. Will they destroy the Louvre one of these days, the swine? After a while the searchlights go out. Only the stars are left.

There's another *alerte* at 6.30 a.m. My reaction—Oh, blast them, I want to sleep. I do. The all-clear is sounded soon after. Only why the devil do they have to go on howling the all-clear for over five minutes?

*Monday, 13th May.*

Woke up late—about eleven. A sunny day. *Café au lait* as usual. Went to the café at the corner of the Boulevard Raspail and the Boulevard St.-Germain. Three soldiers were there; they borrowed my *Paris-Midi*. They said the postal service had become badly disorganized; they hadn't heard from their families in the North for several days. No wonder. I waited

for the CB bus to take me to the Madeleine. There were no flowers on the famous Madeleine stalls, which were shut; however, I found a stall in the Boulevard des Capucines close-by. Bought a large bunch of *muguets* for twenty francs to take to Mme Picquart. "*Un peu fanés?*" I remarked. "*Mais non, c'est les derniers cette année,*" the woman said. (Wonder what next year's will be like?—that's a silly way of putting it; but you know what I mean.) The woman had a young girl with her; both seemed to be taking things calmly. Picquart and his wife—the gentlest, sweetest old couple I know—are living in a furnished flat in the Place de la Madeleine. It is musty like a lot of French houses, and full of junk. Greek ikons and things. Also signed photos of Saint-Saens, Massenet, Emile Zola. Old Picquart had been for years a correspondent in Spain. I was given eggs fried in oil *à l'espagnole*; not bad. Also a small bit of lamb Mme Picquart had gone out specially to buy. Lamb is the only "butcher's meat" one can get on Mondays. Her maid, she said, had departed for a munitions works. We talked about Spain and things—Barcelona, Madrid, food conditions there, and also about the present outlook in Spain. We then adjourned for coffee to the *salon* with the celebrity photographs, overlooking the Madeleine. Talked about the Madeleine, and agreed it had the same proportions as the Parthenon, only was dead. The façade facing the Concorde is the only successful part of the building.

Jean Cocteau lives somewhere round here. In *La Fin du Potomac* he goes off the deep end about the Madeleine. (Marion pointed the passage out to me



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the other day.) This discussion was interrupted by an *alerte*. We went out on to the balcony; people were being chased into shelters. I wondered how long I'd get stuck here. Felt annoyed. To pass the time, I tried the tinny piano, unworthy of the famous composer's wife or daughter or whatever she was who now owned the flat. Its original owner was Puaux of the *Temps*, now deceased. There was a book of his cuttings on Clemenceau on one of the *salon* tables.

After a short while the all-clear was sounded. Picquart and I walked along the rue des Mathurins to the Opéra. Then on to Comert's Press conference at the Continental. Lots of Americans there. Futile discussion on censorship, etc. for over an hour. Cadett of *The Times* and Micky Wilson of the *I.N.S.* are in a combative mood, but nobody really cares much about these Press conferences.

Wrote a piece for the paper, then joined Gilbert and Reggie Maynard at the "Hole in the Wall" bar. Reggie says the 7th French Army which drove along the Belgian coast to Holland did it in record time; no German resistance at all. *Isn't that rather suspect?* In the Ardennes, he says, small French tanks made a good show against big German ones. Then on to the Bouteille d'Or on the quai opposite Notre-Dame. A glorious evening—and a good dinner. Last moment of *douceur de vivre* perhaps?

At the office I listened to a broadcast by Frossard, the Minister of Information. "Verdun lasted six months," he says, "the Somme as long. . . ." Are these valid arguments? Haven't the French Ministers realized yet that this type of war is *different*?

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

The French soldiers have been complaining of boredom all these months. What now? I wonder where all my pals are? Young Etienne and Alfred S., and Daniel Benoît, and Paul N., and Jacques G., and dozens of others.

Just before I left the office to-night Géraud (Pertinax) rang me up and asked for an article on Cabinet changes in England for the *Europe Nouvelle*. I said I knew too little about it; I hadn't had time to follow it. I suggest various other people, and ask him and Mme Géraud to lunch. Pertinax is perturbed—the Germans, he says, have taken Longwy and Montmédy. *Sans blague? Brrr. . . .*

*Tuesday, 14th May.*

There was no *alerte* last night. Waking up, I look out of the window. Traffic is dashing over the Pont Royal and the Pont du Louvre. It's a lovely day. Workmen in blue blouses walk along the Quai Voltaire. An old couple is sitting on the bench in front of the bookstalls. Annette, the little maid with specs, bringing in the coffee, says: "*Ils ont traversé la Meuse.*" What? I don't quite know what it means. Where?—in Belgium? Surely not in France? Annette gets me *Excelsior*. I try to figure out from the communiqué what it's all about. Apparently the Germans are trying to drive in a wedge along the Franco-Belgian frontier and break through the "extension" of the Maginot Line. It is the old 1870 road, Longuyon-Sedan—*la route classique de l'invasion*. Pertinax's Longwy is mentioned in the communiqué, but it

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

doesn't say that Longwy has been taken. "The greatest battle in history has begun," Mr. Churchill says. I am not quite sure about the new British Government, with Attlee and Sinclair and Greenwood, who opposed conscription for God knows how long, and as recently as April, 1939. By the way, isn't the capture of Longwy—if confirmed—going to deprive France of a good part of her steel production?

I feel *embusqué*. I wonder if the patronne and the patronne's daughter-in-law with the little baby and the husband at the front don't hate me at heart. But is it my fault there is no conscription in England for men of my age? And then there's that blasted leg I broke two months before the war, which still makes me limp sometimes. I'd be *réformé* in France. But it makes me feel bad all the same.

No, there was no air-raid last night. It's a bad sign. The bloody German bombers must be too busy elsewhere. The papers are none too cheering. Wilhelmina, poor old thing—after a 150 years' peaceful reign—and the Dutch Government have fled to London. The bombing at Rotterdam seems to have been frightful—though the papers say hardly anything about it. I go to the Deux Magots to read the papers. How I love this old-time corner of Paris—so different from the garishness of Montparnasse and the nickel-tubed super-café in the Champs-Élysées. Ed. Taylor is there, also Apostolis, an old Greek chap I used to meet at Venizelos's house, and old Bourdin of the *News Chronicle*. Lop, the village idiot of Paris with his flat feet and mop of red hair and that crazy look in his eyes, sells me a drawing of

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

his—very childish, but slightly crazy—for twenty francs. He says he'll be dictator in a few days. He's such a bore. But I like his picture. Poor dear. It'll do as a souvenir of the last days of peaceful Paris. A phallic chapel, and phallic cypresses and phallic hills—*mania grandiosa*; and the silly little white clouds are like the little white clouds in Tommy Lorne's old Glasgow pantomime.

Pertinax and Madame arrive at 1.30 in a taxi; both are looking rather worried. We go to Carboni's. In walks Comert just as Pertinax was telling me the silly story of Dorothy Thompson and the Grynspan murder, and of how she was going to raise a great anti-Nazi fund for that fishy person's defence. Comert and Pertinax shake hands in a strained kind of way, I don't know why they dislike each other so much. Comert joins Taylor and Co. at another table. Pertinax is visibly worried about the situation. He curses the Belgians. In January, he says, the French proposed a preventive occupation up to the Albert Canal; if the Belgians refused, the French Army would stay behind the Maginot Line and its Northern extension if Belgium were invaded. Now because of the British desire to hold the Belgian coast, the French have launched upon the hazardous adventure of helping Belgium *malgré tout*. They are going to lose a lot of men and equipment for nothing. Pertinax is specially worried about the Montmédy-Longwy buckle.

"*Alors c'est l'invasion de la France?*" I say.

"*J'espère que non,*" he replies in a gloomy sort of way. He says the General Staff were very confident

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

a week ago; and are less so now. Mme Géraud is very worried, and not as amusing as usual. Pertinax says there's an idea of holding the Antwerp-Louvain-Namur-Mézières line, but that the Germans are battering at it like hell. The first contacts between the French and Belgian General Staffs took place on Friday night. It's a scandal. He dismisses Pierlot's story of the officer who sacrificed himself in blowing up the Albert Canal bridge as a lot of fake-heroic junk.

Back to the office. Reggie Maynard 'phones to say that a German parachutist has just landed in the Place de la Madeleine. Gilbert dismisses it as tripe. Vernon Bartlett is over here to agitate about the German émigrés being herded into the open-air Stade Buffalo before being sent to internment camps further inland. Reggie thinks the English liberals shouldn't start a row about it at this stage. There are many hard cases; but I suppose he's right. The émigrés are a devil of a problem for the French. My own feeling is that 95 per cent of the "anti-Nazis" are all right; only the French have never taken the trouble to weed out the suspects in any intelligent way; hence the present muddle. Some suspects are certainly at large, while some perfectly decent people I know have been interned since September.

Dear old Andrée Viollis comes to see me; and gives me an indignant document about the persecution of the Communists. I can't be much bothered with that either. I say: *ce n'est pas le moment*. She almost agrees. Sweet old thing. Since the suppres-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

sion of *Ce Soir* she has no newspaper left to write for. She is suspected of Communist sympathies; and although she's one of the finest French journalists, editors are avoiding her like grim death. Her books on Indo-China and Tunisia were the best pieces of *reportage* I know. I then ask her if little Father Stalin will help us out by attacking East Prussia? She doesn't think so. Pertinax remarked at lunch that it was sad to think that Stalin alone could help us out of this mess. He won't, of course.

Wrote a very dull piece for the paper. The military won't give us any information; so it's just hopeless. At the Brasserie Lipp at night I run into Picasso. I also see Georges J. in officer's uniform. He used to be an amusing unconventional bloke in the old days, and very witty, though rather a bore with his pansy manners, which he *would* practise in the Press gallery of the Chamber. He thinks things are not going well at all. "*On perd du terrain.*"

"*Mais pas en France?*"

"*Non, mais tout de même. Les Boches sont des gangsters; les Belges des salauds; les Luxembourgeois aussi, avec leurs 27 soldats.*"

He is formal; now that he's an officer, he has dropped his *République des Camarades* manner, and says not *tu* but *vous*. He looks rather worried. Here we are, in the brightly lit Brasserie Lipp, as if nothing unusual were happening. We drink vin d'Alsace—only because millions of French lads are out there to keep the Boche back. Oh, it's horrible to think of, and a little humiliating.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Wednesday, 15th May.*

Went to the Continental; then walked to the Café Viel in the Boulevard des Capucines and ran into Wolfe-Millikins of the Research League. Gosh, he was dreadful. He thought the Germans would be in Paris in a fortnight. He wasn't going to live under Hitler. He'd shoot himself. It gave one the creeps. I tried to talk big about the French Army. But oh! what if the French Army turns out to be like the Polish cavalry, and the Dutch flooding, and the Albert Canal—just another legend? I can't quite believe it. God, why is there no decent-sized British Army in France?

Gloom at the office. Gilbert is taciturn. The parachutist who descended on Paris yesterday was only a deflated sausage balloon. Little Jeanne Lefèvre, looking rather down at heel, and her daughter Manon arrive. Jules, her son, is in the army—in Belgium they think, and they seem to be taking it cheerfully. Jeanne also talks fairly cheerfully, though with great contempt, of the Daladier gang who sent her to jail for two months for alleged Communist sympathies. She got out only the other day—there were absolutely no charges against her, except that, in the past, she had something to do with the *Ligue Mondiale des Femmes contre la Guerre et le Fascisme*. The Laval boys are great and sacred personages in the Republic but little Jeanne Lefèvre is treated as a dangerous conspirator. That was the Daladier way of dealing with defeatism; and the Reynaud-Mandel way doesn't seem much better.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

But never mind about that just now. What is more important, a million times more important is that the Huns seem to have broken through the French frontier defences at Sedan. Precisely—Sedan of all places. How pleased Hitler must be! There were stories already going around about pressure on the "Sedan sector," though there was nothing but the usual optimistic tripe in to-night's evening Press. But at the War Office to-night one's worst suspicions were confirmed. Since the 10th I started going every day to the conferences of Colonel Thomas. I could have gone ever since the beginning of the war; but there seemed little object in being told day after day about slightly increased or slightly reduced patrol activity. Colonel Thomas is what is known as the "official spokesman." Tall, thin, closely cropped hair, moustache and pince-nez: I don't know why he reminds me of Captain Dreyfus's pictures in the history books. His conferences are held round a large table in a big room of the War Office, with medieval armour, and trophies and halberts and things on the walls. To-night there was an unmistakable air of gloom in the place.

"The Germans," he said, "to-day adopted against France the methods they had already employed against Poland." (Brrr—what a beginning!) "This method," he said, "consisted in a light artillery barrage, followed by a tremendous onslaught by tanks and dive-bombers." He admitted that they had succeeded in crossing the Meuse at Sedan. "And from now on," he added ominously, "*the*



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*stationary warfare gives way to a war of movement*”—obviously, the one thing which according to all supporters of the Maginot system France cannot afford, and cannot succeed in, with her inferiority in both effectives and equipment. “The situation,” Colonel Thomas said, “is not unlike that of March 1918. *La situation est sérieuse; mais elle n’est ni critique, ni désespérée.*” (God, fancy saying that on the second day of the attack on France!)

Somebody at the conference remarks that the German wireless to-day claimed that the Germans had broken through the Maginot Line. Colonel Thomas remarks impatiently—for he realizes as well as we all do the futility of his argument—that the Maginot Line proper ends at Montmédy. What the Germans have crossed “in a few places” is the northern “extension” of the Line along the Belgian border. It’s a fearful shock to everybody. I go back to the office in great gloom. After writing a piece, I go on to Poccardi’s with Gilbert, Gaby (a friend of his) and Marion. The place is crowded. We drink a lot but eat little. Gaby is untalkative. Gilbert bites my nose off when I mention war. “If you go on talking about war your nerves will just go to hell.” He’s dreadfully gloomy himself; and admits he has had a sick feeling all day round the solar plexus. Marion and Gaby bravely try to make conversation, and even to tell amusing stories. But it doesn’t really work. Gilbert thinks the railway stations in Paris will shortly be bombed; perhaps to-night. He adds that the black-out should be made absolute.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Thursday, 16th May.*

In spite of Gilbert's prophecies there was not even an *alerte* last night. The bombers must be too damn busy elsewhere. I wonder if the Huns have got to Reims? Where's Basil? Alive? A few bookstalls are still open on the Seine. It is difficult to write when you've got that sinking feeling about the stomach. If I were sure the French wouldn't lose the war I'd be a lot happier.

I went early to the office. Poor concierge! I asked her if she hadn't better go and join her child in the Basses Pyrénées. She said she had her *loge* here, while there, in the south—"c'est un pays pauvre, Monsieur; je suis l'aînée dans une famille de 13 enfants. . . . There's no work—housework or anything—to be got there." Funny to see a man cleaning the stair windows.

I went to the bank. Verneti, the manager, said he had never had such a busy morning. Customers with urgent business had been pouring into his office. For the last two hours he had tried in vain to snatch a moment to go to the *petit endroit*. No doubt about it. People are clearing out of Paris. Taxis are hard to get. There is panic in the air.

I met Reggie Maynard for lunch. He was in an artificially cheery mood: Three to one on our victory not two to one against! as Wolfe-Millikins had said. He agreed, though, that we might have to buzz off to Bordeaux—but we'd go on fighting. Even if England alone held out for six months it would be o.k. (Funny how people have already started talking in terms of "England alone.") German supplies,

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

he said, would be exhausted, etc., etc. There are two million fanaticized young Nazis; if half of these were killed, it would be all right. "But, oh God, don't talk about maps!" said Reggie. "Everybody in our joint has been looking at maps! Looking for Châlons, Epernay and other places they are supposed to have reached." Reggie thought Stalin might yet help us. We lunched at a cheap place in rue Richepanse—there were still lots of people there.

At *The Times* office, their R.A.F. correspondent who had just got back from Reims, was machine-gunned this morning at Reims station. Roads were being machine-gunned. No signs of Allied fighter aircraft. He saw Basil yesterday; his R.A.F. unit had been moved west. The R.A.F. man said the Germans were dropping parachutists all over the place. The evacuated aerodromes were not being bombed—the Huns were apparently trying to keep them intact for themselves. For the present, machine-gunners had been left in charge of the aerodromes to kill parachutists. Everything, he thought, looked an infernal mess.

Picquart still can't believe it's true; but adds: "Well, if it *is* true, then there's been something terribly wrong with the whole French defence system." Gilbert thinks the *guerre de mouvement* phrase sinister; it means the complete wash-out of the much-vaunted Maginot system. In short: *L'invasion est en marche*—that invasion they had dreaded more than anything else for twenty years. "But aren't the French," I say, "at least trying to reduce the pocket?" Gilbert: "Pocket? It looks more like a whole bloody trouser leg."

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

I didn't go to the Chamber to hear Reynaud—couldn't be bothered. Am I beginning to neglect my work? This *je-m'en-foutisme* is unhealthy. What about Musso? Is he getting scared of the overwhelming extent of the German success?

The buses have disappeared. They are bringing refugees from Reims, etc. and are transporting troops. It has given people a dreadful shock. Reminded them of the Battle of the Marne. Many taxis have also disappeared, perhaps for the same reason. Such *moyens de fortune* are not very healthy, are they?

I went to the War Office conference. Colonel Thomas tried to look cheerful. He denied that the Germans had got very far. No change since yesterday at Sedan: that's to say "no advance worthy of the name." He also angrily denied rumours of the Germans at Lens, Reims, Compiègne, Meaux. I hadn't even heard *these* rumours. But it seems true enough that their armoured units got to Châlons-sur-Marne.

At the Press Conference Charles Morice (*Petit Parisien*) accused the Fifth Column of the Ministry of Information of spreading panic rumours. "*C'est une honte*," he yelled dramatically. The Colonel concluded: "*Hier les nouvelles étaient mauvaises, on était optimiste, aujourd'hui elles sont meilleures, et on parle de désastre.*" I don't see that they are so *very* good.

Old Bourdin of the *News Chronicle* said the atmosphere at the Chamber this afternoon was appalling. Herriot was weeping. I remembered Herriot's harangue at the Biarritz Congress: "*La France qui depuis des*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*siècles, comme une cariatide magnifique, soutient le temple de la civilisation contre cette poussée.*" Yes, the *poussée* is getting tough.

Reynaud made a gloomyish speech suggesting that Gamelin would get the sack. Gilbert thinks Bonnet will soon land in gaol. Wishful thinking I call it.

The stories to-night are more reassuring. Two generals, according to Lobby gossip, assured Reynaud that the situation was now well in hand. Another—Giraud?—claimed that he could establish a *proper front* within a week. God, I hope he's right. Somebody ought to be shot for the mess at the pivot of the so-called fortification system. One of the important things seems to be that we should send them a lot of fighter 'planes. Otherwise this bombing and machine-gunning of the French troops will harass all the guts out of them. What one hears about the break-through on the Meuse suggests that most of the French troops were overwhelmed by the German technique, lost their heads and ran, especially the officers. Reynaud in his broadcast to-night tried to be more reassuring.

Is there a panic in Paris? The streets seem emptier than usual. I wonder why the Colonel didn't mention Châlons and Épernay. The German motorized columns must have got there, after all. If so, they are getting damn near Paris. General Duval in the *Journal* pretty well admits it. He says these columns penetrate far inland, but suggests that it isn't important. Isn't it? Are the Germans doing it just to see the scenery?

Marion went to the Préfecture to get her *carte*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*d'identité* fixed up. Just as well to have one's papers in order these days. On her way there she saw several art students on the quai painting pictures of the Ile de la Cité, one of them in uniform.

*Friday, 17th May.*

Last night I sat at the window looking at the Seine and the Louvre. Starry, moonlit night, as peaceful as it's ever been. Later, I heard a terrific crash somewhere in the distance, out east, and lots of guns going off. Then silence. I slept well, but faintly remember loud jingling noises—like milk-vans. This morning the maid said it was tanks going east. Bringing in the *Journal*, she said hopefully: "*Les nouvelles sont un peu meilleures, n'est-ce pas?*" "Yes, yes, *much* better."

One of the bookstalls on the quai is still open. I must go and talk to the woman. The Boches aren't bombing Paris. It's an alarming symptom. Are they imagining they'll get Paris easily?

In the little Greek place in the rue Lafayette, I have lunch with Lyosha, one of my White Russian friends. If ever there was a tramp, a *clochard* by nature, he is one. He has sponged on me for years, but he is so sweet-natured that I can never refuse him a hundred francs. Before leaving Russia he studied the violin at the Petrograd Conservatoire. He never got very far; but when he is specially hard up, he plays Brahms's Hungarian dances and that sort of thing outside cafés and collects a few francs, even at the risk of being caught by the police. He lives in a ghastly

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

slum in the rue Mouffetard, that famous "picturesque" street of Old Paris which the tourists love, and pays four francs a day for his room. He got run over by a tramcar in Berlin in the early days of the emigration, and is very lame; and it's an excellent excuse with him for not looking for a real job. Dear old Lyosha! He spends much of his time reading philosophy, and has stacks of manuscripts in his slum—abstruse philosophical stuff, and also attempts at fiction. He thinks they'll be published some day. To-day he talked of going into an armaments works—but of course he won't. He is a *clochard* by nature, and is taking things very calmly. "You don't understand psychology," he says. "I do. And let me tell you: the French are a degenerate people, an absolutely degenerate people. They're mad. They're neurotic to the last degree. They won't fight. I spent a year in a lunatic asylum myself," he adds cheerfully, "so I know what I am talking about." He discusses Dostoievsky, and says he is now writing a book, very much on Dostoievsky lines. "I have still time," he says, "for becoming a famous writer. I am only 47. Do you know that Sophocles died at the age of 104; and that he wrote *Œdipus* when he was 98?" I suggest he wasn't quite as old as that; Lyosha agrees it may have been a little less.

Comert, at his Press conference, describes the steam-roller tactics adopted by the German mechanized units. He seems rather perturbed. Later Gilbert and I go to Colonel Thomas's conference at the War Office. He looks less cheerful than last night. Talks

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of a *very* important German offensive now in progress in the Ardennes. It seems clear that they've broken through the "extension" at much more than just *one* point. Gamelin has addressed an *ordre du jour* to the Army: "*Vaincre ou mourir: il faut vaincre.*" It's all very well for him since he's going to be sacked anyway. It sounds sinister. Weygand is in Paris. They say his appointment in Gamelin's place is now a matter of hours.

Comert said that Churchill last night made an admirable impression on the French: "*Impression extraordinaire*"—vitality, determination, confidence. They are sending a lot of British fighter 'planes to France. About time.

Paris is getting emptier. The buses are off the streets; busy taking troops north and taking refugees all over the place. Taxis are scarce. There are lots of Belgian cars in Paris, with mattresses on top. They belong to the luckier Belgians. What about the others?

Gilbert and I have dinner with Laugier at Carboni's. I ask Laugier, who is a director of the Scientific Research Bureau if they haven't got a secret weapon. "Yes," he says, "we've got plenty, *mais c'est très délicat.*" He claims that the Germans have so far really produced no new stunts except amphibious tanks with some compressed-air gadget, which enables them to cross rivers. He recriminates loudly against Franco-British policy over the last twenty years—always giving way, always taking the line of least resistance, and in the end letting Hitler



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

choose his time for making war on us. "Laval," he says, "is a great criminal." But he tries to be optimistic on the whole. Tough on us who have to live through these "great historic hours"—"but if France is Germanized the Huns may become civilized in the long run." I recall the Chekhov character who says that "in three hundred years life will become infinitely beautiful." Laugier laughs: "In French we say: '*Si ma tante en avait, elle serait mon oncle.*'" Dear old Laugier! This jovial Provençal is certainly one of the things the Huns will destroy if they destroy European civilization. I don't think the Italians will survive either. Laugier then tells the story of a doctor who promised a man 100 years' life: "No wine, no women, no tobacco. You mayn't live fully 100 years, but it'll seem like it."

*Saturday, 18th May.*

The news from the Front is distinctly lousy. They are striking hammer blows at the pocket—all their mechanized divisions are now concentrated against France. Where are the precious French anti-tank guns? Are the Germans trying to turn the Maginot Line at Sedan?—or go west—either towards Paris or towards the Channel? A good article by Romier in the *Figaro*: but badly cut by the censorship. The Belgian Government has gone to Ostend. Less than a week ago they said they wouldn't quit Brussels. *On dit ça*. Reynaud said the same about Paris on Thursday.

Walked from the quai to the office. Fowler, the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

business manager, looked worried, and asked if I had done anything about evacuating myself. I reply semi-jovially that the question never occurred to me. (In fact it has.) There are lots of Belgian cars in the street with mattresses over their roofs, but—also some French cars with the same—and with *Paris* number plates. *On fout le camp*. People are still buying odds-and-ends at the Galeries Lafayette—especially shoes and suit-cases. A crowd outside the Chaussée d'Antin Metro station is snatching up the latest *Intransigeant*. Muddle-headed headlines, and not very reassuring.

On to Reggie Maynard's office. He's gone to London in a War Office 'plane. No ordinary passengers can get to London any more. What seats there are on the two remaining 'planes are booked weeks ahead. I see Wolfe-Millikins instead. Find him full of gloom as usual. He says they're pouring in troops over a front of 100 miles or more. I wish I knew what he is going to do with his 37 Picassos and 10 Cézannes at Fontainebleau. He talks of beating it if the Huns come too near Paris; he's sure he'll be taken to Dachau and tortured. Wonder if he really has *any* secrets worth knowing? I ring up Mrs. Maynard. She's worried about poodle's worms. I wish I could get worried about poodle's worms. She's an astonishing mixture. She's genuinely worried about her poodle; yet, she is going to the Front next week (or somewhere very near the Front) to drive an ambulance. She doesn't suffer from the weepiness of most of the French women.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

At the office, just as that old bore Ignatov arrives with his fat Jewish wife (both of them worried out of their wits) and with the offer of more "inside dope" about Russia, the sirens go off. I dump them in the accountant's office. Marion, who had come in to borrow some of my M. of I. papers, and who also got trapped in the office, writes letters home; she has a good unperturbed manner. I go on typing, though I feel my heart beating a little faster than usual. The Place de l'Opéra and all the streets are empty, except for some cops and rows of empty cars along the pavements. The sky is black with thunder-clouds. A few guns go off in the distance, but there is no sign of any 'planes. Later I learn that four were brought down, three by A.A. guns and one by a fighter, out of a total of 16. On their way here they bombed Meaux.

After the all-clear I rush to the Continental to hand in my piece for the paper. The air-raid has made me very late. Since the fire broke out there yesterday (why the Fifth Column should want to burn that G.H.Q. of inefficiency God only knows) they are very strict about cards; I have to get mine specially stamped on the back. The soldiers outside are jumpy and worried-looking, and rather rude. Haven't seen old Pontoy for a long time; wonder if his son, Étienne, is still alive? How silly Pontoy's Franco-British cultural *rapprochement* stuff now seems! And also all that peace aims rubbish our Left-wing intellectuals never ceased talking about. I kept on telling the Editor it was much too early to talk about that.

Later I learned that Pétain had entered the Government, that Reynaud had become War Minister,

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Daladier, Foreign Minister, and Mandel, Minister of the Interior. That's all right, if only he is given time to shoot the Fifth Column blokes.

On to the Deux Magots, full of nondescript looking people—not the usual crowd. Who are they? I buy *Paris-Soir* and the *Temps*. *Paris-Soir* says the French soldiers are now getting accustomed to dive bombers, and are quickly learning how to dodge the bombs and bullets. Tripe. It also claims that the "75" field guns are excellent for demolishing tanks "at close range." More nonsense about the "French genius for improvisation." Just the right time for "improvising" things, eh? The *Temps* gives a long quotation from General Charteris's article in the *Manchester Guardian* on the new warfare. Not at all reassuring; nor is the front-page article in the *Temps* by some French general. It explains all that the Germans are doing but says nothing about our counter-measures.

It appears that on Thursday Gamelin expected the Germans to reach Paris that very night.

Arriving at the War Office to-night I see an ugly familiar face sticking out of the window on the first floor: Bonnet! He probably recognized me, because he hastily turned round and disappeared. Is he making a Fifth Column proposal to Daladier now that Daladier has been thrown out of the War Office? Trying to sell out England to Hitler? Or else is he trying to get Daladier to save him from Mandel's wrath?

Colonel Thomas was very indefinite to-night; but what he says contains a dreadful admission: "we

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

haven't suffered any reverses to-day *because* the Germans didn't try to advance anywhere"—or words to that effect. David Scott was there. On his way from Bar-le-Duc last night his train was bombed by thirteen German 'planes. The passengers fled across the fields. The train should have arrived in Paris at 8 p.m., it arrived at six the next morning. Oddly enough, nobody was killed, except four chickens belonging to the *chef de Gare*. Gilbert makes a ribald remark about the *chef de Gare*. D. Scott thought the war correspondents would be allowed to return to the Front to-morrow—a good sign, he thought. I wonder. He still has faith in the "75's," of which, he says, there is a very large number. He also thinks the French have lots of tanks. He drives me back to the hotel. Reynaud had just talked on the wireless. The *patronne* is in tears. She quotes Reynaud: "*La situation est grave, mais pas désespérée.*" Nice cheering propaganda, what?

On to the Continental. The taxi-driver says he has been very busy taking people to railway stations.

A late dinner in the little *bistrot* at the corner of the rue de Beaune and the quai. The pretty, young waitress looks very perturbed. Her brother is in the army, and she has had no news from him for a fortnight. She comes from Marseilles and talks with a rich Midi accent. Makes me think of cypresses and little white-washed houses. "We can't, we can't live *sous les tyrannings*," she says. "*J'aime mieux me foutre à la Seine.*" The men, she says, go to the Front bravely: they know it is better to die than to live "*sous les tyrannings.*" Only she thinks it's all very

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

terrible—"2,000 tanks this way and 2,000 tanks that way." Queer to think that in 1935 Reynaud already advocated the creation of numerous French *Panzer-divisionen*. Why wasn't this followed up? Daladier and his generals were against it. His precious Maginot Line and the *service militaire* were good enough, he thought. Nation in arms, good old Jacobin-cum-Jaurès tripe. The old night porter at the hotel was much more cheering; he thought we had seen far worse moments than this in the last war. I gave him ten francs.

David Scott thinks they are going *crescendo* with their bombing. Now that Meaux has been bombed Paris will come next. Wareing of the *Daily Telegraph* has been listening to the German wireless, which claims that there have been sixty-one Allied raids over Germany, and only seven of them directed against military objectives. Does that mean we are in for reprisals?

Before going to bed, I read some Charles Péguy. The stuff props up one's faith in France.

*Sunday, 19th May.*

Sent some wires, but had to get my signature first registered at the police station—it's a new rule. Then went to the rue V. in a taxi. Outside the corner café little *gamins* were imitating air-raid sirens. Saw old Peter and little Aunt Luba. They're a hell of a problem. No way of getting them out of Paris—and, even if there is—what are they going to live on? I talk gloomy stuff. If the Germans come to Paris, I'll

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

beat it, hoping to get to England—but how can I send them anything from there if they're under Boche occupation? Shouldn't old people face suicide cheerfully? But somehow they don't like to. Perhaps they are even more reluctant about it than I'd be in their position. It's all very painful. But perhaps I ought to explain about the White-Russian clan.<sup>1</sup>

Yes: my Russians are going to be a dreadful problem. They are getting so old and helpless. Of the whole bunch Kolya alone has a job—and he doesn't know if it'll last, because it's an American firm, and imports are being more and more restricted. I have known them all these years; and old Peter Vassilievitch has become a very dear friend. He was a Government official—a *chinovnik* in Tsarist days, but his chief interest had always been literature. He can quote Russian poetry by the hour, and also long bits of French, German and English poetry. He knows Pushkin and Lermontov and Tyutchev and Innokenti Annensky inside out; he loves Byron and Shelley, and Baudelaire, and Heine and Goethe's *Faust*. He used to write articles in *Apollon* before the last war, the most highbrow of literary magazines in Russia. *Apollon* discovered Matisse and Picasso for the Russians. He also loves gipsy music, and tells endless stories of the good old days in Russia. He adores Italian opera; and perhaps the last real treat in his life was when I went with him not long ago to hear *La Traviata* at the Opéra-Comique. He is infinitely devoted to me, though he greatly disap-

<sup>1</sup> The story of the White Russians was added a little later to the Diary.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

proves of my "Left" politics. . . . Poor old "Uncle" Peter. He's 70 now, and is in poor health, though he still likes to tell funny stories, of the Russian Rabelaisian kind. Poor old Luba, his wife, has been slowly dying these last few months. She has been tenderly devoted to Peter all her life, though he seems to have been a bit of a lad in the early days of their married life. Now they are both old and ailing, and were hoping to end their days in peace. They live in a tiny house in a large modern block of flats. The two rooms—one of them occupied by Kolya—are full of junk, but which Luba adores. The furniture is dilapidated; the chairs creak under you most ominously; and the blue-checked oil-cloth on the dining-room table is tattered. So is old Peter's tweed jacket I gave him years ago. There are also lots of pictures and photographs and ikons on the walls.

Luba has three sisters: Sonya, Anuta and Nadya. "Aunt" Nadya is well over seventy, and white-haired. She lives in a little flat at Auteuil, and is very much under the thumb of her daughter Liza and her son-in-law. She owned the biggest stationery shop in St. Petersburg and rolled in money, and loves reminiscing about her *dacha* in Finland. Liza is a big hefty woman of about fifty, devoted to her rather decrepit husband—Serge. Serge held a minor post in the Consular service in the Balkans, considers himself very aristocratic, married Liza for her money, and thinks his marriage a bit of a *mésalliance*. He has now a job of sorts, is very right-wing, pro-Nazi and hypochondriac. He disapproves of Lyosha, the



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*clochard* philosopher, who is "Aunt" Nadya's son, and thinks him rather a disgrace to the family.

The two other sisters are Sonya and Anuta. These two have a genius for taking life easily. They are about 60, but they dye their hair, and pretend to be 48 and 49. They are always penniless but always manage to muddle along—partly by cultivating other Russians and also a few French people who ask them to meals. In spite of their constant grumbling against fate, they are the most carefree people I know. They have great social ambitions, and cultivate assiduously one of the minor Grand Dukes. Their French is appallingly bad, but very fluent. In the summer they run a tea-shop at Vittel. They work like slaves, take in lots of Russians as p.g.'s; out of sheer kindness of heart they charge them, "as old friends," much less than they spend on them, and return to Paris every autumn completely broke and in debt. The tea-room isn't really a tea-room; it's a kind of shed in the park of a dilapidated château belonging to a miserly old Frenchwoman; she lets them have the shed, but Sonya and Anuta have to feed her and her two daughters in return. "Aunt" Sonya has a husband who was once a lawyer in Russia. He was never a financial success, though he has always been full of great schemes. What little money they had he invested in German marks back in 1921, hoping to become a millionaire. He has now a job as a legal "consultant" with some Russian refugee committee. Aunt Sonya treats her husband with tolerant contempt. She thinks he's been a waster, who has let her down both socially and financially. He treats her with respect, though some-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

times he loses his temper, and they have dreadful rows. They have lived these last twenty years from hand to mouth; but they have lived, because there was an émigré society which made such living possible. What's to happen to them if everything collapses in France? "Aunt" Anuta is little more than an understudy of Aunt Sonya, whom she admires and tries to imitate. She got married in the inflation days in Germany to an Austrian professor; she thought he had pots of money; and he thought she had. When they discovered that none had any, they got divorced. He had been taken in by the grand style she lived in in the West End of Berlin on the £6 a month she used to get from friends in England. Both Sonya and Anuta have since been sharing a small flat in the suburbs with a Madame Nikitina, an ex-ballet dancer, who gets a few dollars a month from an ex-admirer now in America. Madame Nikitina is now a sweet old thing, though, until recently, she had an unhealthy admiration for Hitler. Like "Aunt" Sonya's husband, she was convinced Hitler would restore Holy Russia. Another member of the clan is a good friend of mine, Dr. Grechaninov, known as Vanya. He is slim and youthful for his 60 years; and has, in fact, been neglecting his medical profession for literary pursuits. He has spent the last seven years writing a tremendously long, rather Proustian autobiography, with purple patches in the manner of Turgenev. It is 300,000 words long, and he found a Maecenas—a rich Jew he had met at Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese war—to stump up the money to get it published. It looks like a telephone directory and has

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

sold 91 copies. Dear old White Russians!—they are the most inefficient and most lovable people in the world. The very antithesis of the brave new world Hitler wants to set up.

On to Surcouf in the Boulevard Montparnasse. Good lunch. Couple of old beggars come to talk to me. They also are worried about La France. Then on in a taxi to the Embassy where Milford wanted to see me. I tell him about Bonnet's ugly face sticking out of War Office window. He is greatly interested. He talks in his usual, slightly platitudinous, way—"Grave but not desperate," etc. He is very pleased about Mandel's appointment but regrets the sacking of Léger: says he was a good man who had now been sacked "owing to personal differences with Reynaud." (The truth is that Mme de Portes, Reynaud's friend, can't stick Léger. She is a bad defeatist influence. It was also she who got Palewski, Reynaud's able and pro-British *chef de cabinet* sacked.) Léger was anti-Italian, and very pro-British—he did a lot of good work for the Entente, Milford says. I find out from casual talk that Neville Henderson is here. I wonder why?

Milford was much upset when a few days ago he heard that Gamelin was going to be fired. "But he is so safe!" he said. Now he is no longer of the same mind. He is greatly worried about the break-through on the Maginot "extension" but says that the British Government are partly to blame. In the past they refused the French a loan for extending the *real* Maginot Line right up to the sea.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

On to the office; the streets are crowded, and the cafés packed. At the office Picquart shows me *Ya*, a Madrid Falangist paper, with a facetious article on the "End of Paris." Why should the Spaniards want to see the end of Paris?

Gloom at the War Office conference. As we go out I see Weygand and Pétain enter their car. Weygand looks good in uniform; the last time I saw him was at the *Revue des Deux Mondes* dinner; he looked insignificant in mufti. Dapper little man, full of vitality, with almost good humour written on his face. Gosh, what a job he's undertaking! Dreadful to think the Left politicians turned him out because he went to mass! Pétain looks rather more solemn. Poor old boy—fancy being dragged into all this at his age.

Supper at the Brasserie Lipp. Met Joe Little of the Chicago something or other. Rather an ass, but amusing. He thinks he'll try to swim the Atlantic. He felt the same way in March '18. He talks about Poland, where he was during the war. Thinks that even if France is beaten the U.S.A. and England will carry on the struggle. The U.S.A. will provide 50,000 'planes, etc. But the U.S.A., he says, must come in before Hitler has had time to consolidate his conquests.

In fact, it's queer to think that Italy and Russia will remain in Europe the last—and very doubtful—homes of European civilization if France and Great Britain go under. But for how long? We drink a couple of bottles of Alsace wine. I feel pleasantly tight.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Monday, 20th May.*

Went to the Continental after writing a sloppy article about Paris these days. I must get it sent through the Embassy bag or it'll never get there. But before I can do that I must get the Censors to o.k. it. Colonel Michel crosses out the passage against Daladier: "He's still a member of the Government, after all," he says—"je ne dis pas que je ne suis pas d'accord avec vous, mais——" Nice little man.

Comert tries to sound more confident; he says that the French soldiers are getting used to this kind of warfare. (I read all that in *Paris-Soir* already.) While in Colonel Michel's office, I heard a bloke telephone the censorship *consignes*:

*Rien sur le bombardement du Havre;*

*Rien sur l'Espagne et l'Italie;*

*Rien sur l'évacuation probable de la colonie  
anglaise de Paris.*

The bombardment of Le Havre (I later learn) was pretty terrific.

Meet Cooper and Waterfield outside. Also Percy Philip who was nearly shot the other day by a French captain who mistook him for a parachutist. I have lunch in the little restaurant off the rue Duphot. I tell the woman I'll come again, so she puts my napkin in pigeonhole 73. It gives me a nice illusion of continuity and stability.

The French papers are being reduced from four pages to two.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Wired to the paper to send me two months' salary "for all emergencies."

Cheerful news reached me from the censors' office at night that all telephone (and telegraph?) communications between Paris and London had been broken off—lines cut; Fifth Column at work, or what? The censors regretted that the copy "couldn't be sent for the present." Nice mess the Press is going to be in. I suppose it never occurred to the French authorities to have some proper alternative lines between Paris and London. One or two lines by St. Malo or somewhere are being reserved for the Government.

At the Ministry of War there was an indefinite atmosphere. Colonel Thomas said there was some heavy fighting "around" St. Quentin and Peronne. He tried to suggest that the German progress was slowing down. I've noticed that when they mention places "round" which there is fighting, it means these places are already in German hands.

*Tuesday, 21st May.*

Get up early. A lovely morning on the river. The papers are rather more reassuring than on previous days. A feeling of respite and yet—— After running into Marion at the Deux Magots, we go for a walk along the Quai Voltaire and Quai Malaquais, look at the Institut de France; and walk into the courtyard of the Bibliothèque Mazarine; old, old walls; rather musty looking; little young shoots of a vine over the gateway. Under the gateway there's a poster showing

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the different kinds of German bombers—Heinkels, Dorniers, etc.; also a model of the swastika flag. The swastika already on the Institut de France!! Hateful. But what a lovely dome! We walk on; the bookstalls on the parapets are all shut. We then look at the pictures in an art-dealer's shop in one of the side streets, and decide that Jean Dufy is not as good as Raoul Dufy—much too fussy and muddled. There is also a landscape there by some woman who gets perspective by painting portions of the picture on different superimposed slides of glass!! We walk along the Quai Malaquais and sit on a stone bench on the Pont-Neuf. Look at Henri IV covered up with sandbags. The "Sailor" poster for the armaments bonds, which was nailed to the sandbags, has been torn down; they have put in its place the map of the world poster with "*nous vaincrons parce que nous sommes les plus forts*"—and with the British and French Empires, Canada, the Sahara and the rest, shown in large splashes of red, and a tiny little black Germany. Doesn't sound very convincing. I look at this lovely spot of Paris—Paris in its agony: and feel an infinite tenderness for it. We go on to Paul's little restaurant—Basil's favourite. Wonder where Basil is now? My old friend the proprietor is jovial; spouts *faut pas s'en faire* stuff. "*Nous foutons les pessimistes à la Seine*," he says. It occurs to me how the damned German soldiers must be gorging themselves now on butter and meat and wine in the Ardennes. Economic war? There was a theory that the Bolsheviks went south against Denikin because they were hungry. Perhaps if the Huns eat well for

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

a couple of generations they'll become more human. We, too, have a good lunch; and the *patron* takes a great interest in whether we like the duck. To-day's papers are on a single sheet and not worth reading.

I go on to the Senate. Reynaud has just started talking. He is talking in a dead kind of voice. The statues of Condé and Turgot look down on him impassively. It's a beautiful hall. The Press gallery is crowded. "*La patrie est en danger*," says Reynaud. He talks about the Weygand appointment. Voices on the right: "*Trop tard*." They cheer half-heartedly and stand up after some hesitation at the mention of Weygand and Pétain; they stand up again and cheer when Reynaud mentions the R.A.F. But a deadly gloom hangs over the assembly; and when Reynaud suddenly declares that Arras and Amiens have fallen, a gasp of bewilderment rises from the senators' benches. There are not very many of them there. Many must have buzzed off to their châteaux. Among the deputies standing to the side of the tribune, I see Léon Blum, very pale, and also Mistler, of Munich fame. Paul-Boncour's white perruque and the negroid head of Laval are among the Senators. Jeanneney, the Speaker, looks deadly pale; after the end of Reynaud's speech he says a few words in a faltering voice. Reynaud's belief in miracles somehow reminds me of the Russian communiqué after the Battle of Tannenberg: "God will not desert Holy Russia." What Reynaud said about the Meuse crossing almost suggests that there was treason, or at least hopeless incompetence. "We shall punish . . ." Actually, I



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

don't believe there was any treason. The man in charge of the Sedan sector was General Corap,<sup>1</sup> a decent bearded old fellow, who hadn't had enough pull to be given a "good" sector on the Maginot Line, and who was left on the undefended Meuse with some Senegalese and other second-rate troops to *débrouille* himself.

Poor Reynaud—what a heritage to take over from the Munichois gang. He had, together with Colonel de Gaulle, been advocating *Panzerdivisionen* for France back in '35. "A new kind of war we shall start," he now says. "Isn't it a bit late?" the Senators mumble.

As I go out, I run into K. K. "I've got a pipeline to the Elysée," he whispers mysteriously. "It was very interesting to watch Caillaux and Laval during Reynaud's speech to-day. Did you notice? They weren't at all impressed. There is a lot of talk, I may tell you, about a separate peace after the fall of Paris. Just you wait." Well, well, good old K. K. with his defeatist outlook; true to type still. He is amiable; but how he'd like to see me in a concentration camp, after passing me on to France's Seyss-Inquart, whoever he may be! I avoid shaking hands with the blighter. Outside, I run into the little Midi fellow from the Oran paper. He looks very pale, and says: "*C'est le discours du désastre.*" I walk down to St. Sulpice; and take a taxi to the office.

The news at the office is no better. The telephone

<sup>1</sup> I hope my spelling is correct: I heard it a hundred times after the break-through, but not once did I see it in print. The French censorship saw to that.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

with London is still cut. Nothing good from the Front either. The Huns claim the capture of Abbeville. Perhaps it was they who cut the 'phone lines. Apparently they have smashed the Amiens army to smithereens; they also claim the capture of two French generals. The B.B.C. this afternoon denies the fall of Arras, which, it says, is in the British sector. It's hard to reconcile with Reynaud's story. Young Lord Kneller, attached to some liaison committee, comes to see me. He says he is more cheerful than he has been for days; why he can't explain. He expects an Allied offensive—British from the north, French from the south, which would cut the German wedge to hell. I wonder.

As I was talking on the telephone at six o'clock, the air-raid warning was sounded, and I was immediately cut off. I go to the flat downstairs; wonder if they'll start bombing now. Try to play the piano but can't be bothered. Is my journalism at an end? There's no 'phone to London. The other papers started sending messages by wireless. I decide to send a short message just to salve my conscience and to try out the Radio-France system.

After the all-clear I go out to the Café de la Paix to meet Gilbert. He is late. I hang about outside. In spite of the air raid which stopped only five minutes ago, the terrace is crowded. I run into Bzowiecki, a former journalist, now in Polish officer's uniform. I tell him that the "Poles weren't so lousy after all." He says: "I wish we *had* been *relatively* lousy." He says the French have suddenly started treating the Poles with great politeness. Until

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

10th May they treated them like dirt, *des pauvres types, quoi!*

Picquart returns from the War Office conference; he was told that Weygand had gone to the Front; "*les armées prennent leurs dispositions sur la Somme et jusqu'aux Vosges.*" Hope the "*dispositions*" are good. We've got to stop them now or never. The bridges are blown up on the Somme. I don't much like this piece of news; for what about the Flanders army? Is Weygand going to make no attempt to advance north of the Somme to join up with them? It's suggested that the bridges were blown up before Weygand took command. I wonder.

When I got back to the hotel to-night there was a crowd in the hall downstairs. A Belgian Jew describes how he went parachutist hunting: "First they drop a dummy, stuffed with explosive," he says, "You mustn't touch *him*. The next one is the chap to get. One of my men strangled one with his bare hands." The *patronne* in her usual high-necked black dress—what a depressing dress!—looks distressed. There is also a young girl there who speaks of the Germans as brutes, etc. and says that they run their tanks over wounded men. Another woman says they dropped poisoned sweets at the Gare d'Austerlitz the other day, and that one child died after eating one. The story is received sceptically. The girl and the large-mouthed woman from the lady-lawyer's office then start arguing about Jouhaux—one upholding the eight-hour day, the other running Jouhaux down; "if we had worked harder, we shouldn't be where

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

we are," the girl says. Both, however, agree that the Huns are savages; they ridicule the separate peace talk; they agree that it would be not only *déshonneur* but *la fin de tout*. There can be no question of it; the Huns wouldn't leave the French where they are; they'd deport them all to the Sahara. Better to die. They all agree that the R.A.F. is magnificent. Curious how in the last few weeks the R.A.F. has become more popular in France than the French Army.

There is a chow next door, brought by Belgian refugees. The damn thing howls most funereally.

*Wednesday, 22nd May.*

I couldn't sleep till 3 o'clock. Kept listening to sounds. Nerves on edge. Wake up at nine; there had been no bombing, no *alerte*. I suppose the Huns are battering at the Channel Ports and trying to cut off the Anglo-Franco-Belgian armies. There is great depression in Paris. Cars are dashing about all over the place. Gilbert has packed off his Belgian refugees; they left by train (a very packed train) for Bordeaux. At the Continental there was a queue of people wanting to see Trouvet—travel permits, exit permits for England, etc. Run into Geoffrey; he is perturbed about the rear in France being "even more inefficient than the French Army." He wants to get back to England; but has to get a French exit permit and doesn't know how long it will take with all this red tape. Nor is he sure which way to go; St. Malo seems the only possible route. He might go via Jersey; only "Jersey seems such a good target for

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

parachutists." He's distinctly worried, and thinks the Huns may be here in a few days. I've been wondering whether to follow the Government if it has to quit Paris, or whether to go straight back to England where the struggle will continue—I hope.

I go and see the old Russian gang. Old Peter accuses me of being panicky and tries to be very cheerful. S. and A. are in a weepy state. I give them and P. some money; I say I can't guarantee how long I'll stay in Paris; there's a lot of sobstuff. I feel it would be the end of them if everything collapsed. To-day's Weygand-Reynaud statement on the situation is more reassuring: "*tenir un mois* and the war will be half-won." Only, later, I was told that Reynaud had added the optimistic note to Weygand's very gloomy statement.

In the afternoon I see Comert; he is more confident; thinks we shouldn't be over-impressed by "spectacular German stuff." Go on to the Galeries Lafayette to get photos taken at the Photomaton. Queues of people who need photos for all the various travel permits. Otherwise the shop is absolutely empty. The only other very busy department is that dealing in trunks and suit-cases. There's a slightly panicky atmosphere in Paris.

Back to the Continental, where I run into X. who was an official at the Spanish Republican Embassy in the Spanish war days; a nice chap. Apparently he's trying to get away in case the Germans hand him over to Franco. After that I see Trouvet about my permit for going to the "inland zone." He says there is no hurry about British safe conducts. British can travel about freely till 1st June.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Outside the Continental, in the rue de Rivoli, I run into Pierre Viénot in captain's uniform. "*L'état-major*," says he, "*est très remonté depuis aujourd'hui*; Weygand has done the trick. The whole outlook has greatly improved." Viénot who was Under-Secretary at the Quai d'Orsay in the Blum Cabinet, is now in charge of propaganda in Germany; "not very easy at present," he admits. He is well-meaning, but rather ineffective, I think. Back to the office where I send a longish message to the paper fulminating against the Left-wing politicians who turned out Weygand because he went to Mass, and because they thought a strongly mechanized army might be a weapon in the hands of a would-be dictator. Weygand more or less foresaw this kind of attack in '35; I remember his *Revue des Deux Mondes* articles. What a job for him to put things right now! It is claimed to-night that Arras has been retaken by the Allies; but I am still very worried about the Anglo-Franco-Belgian army being encircled. South of the Somme the French are obviously on the defensive, while the Anglo-Franco-Belgian armies are now hard pressed from two sides. If only the two Allied army groups could cut the German corridor! But the Germans are already pouring a tremendous number of troops through it. I can't make out if they've really got Abbeville; but if they hadn't the French would probably have said so. There's no mention of it in the papers; bad sign.

There are rumours that Gamelin has shot himself.

"Aunt" Nadya 'phones up; begs me to go and see

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

her. She is peeved I haven't left her more money. Well, hell; still, I am sorry for her.

Cosandier, our Swiss chauffeur, is very cynical about journalists. "You fellows get paid to write dope for the public—what you write just isn't true." I feel he's right; the French censorship has made journalism a dishonest trade; and I also feel ashamed of having spoken highly of Gamelin without really knowing a damn thing about him. Glad I didn't sign that article in *Picture Post* last September. Still—I *did* concentrate on his past career and put a question-mark on his future. And even then I wondered whether he was so very good; if he had been, would they have sent him for six years on a military mission to Brazil after the last war?

*Thursday, 23rd May.*

Go to the shoemaker's to pay for my re-soling. Funny little man with old-fashioned spectacles on his red nose, and a drooping dirty moustache. His little old workshop in the rue de Beaune might have been here in the seventeenth century. Sit in a café at the corner of Raspail and St.-Germain and read papers. Kerillis harping on the French *hitlériens* who are still at large. Now that Mandel is at the Interior I wonder if Bonnet is going to be arrested. There are still lots of luggage-laden cars passing; I notice a woman weeping in one of them. The papers say condensed milk is now to be sold only for children. Have lunch at the little restaurant at the corner of the quai and the rue de Beaune; there are several Belgians there read-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

ing *La Meuse*, a Belgian paper now published in Paris. There's a Fiat van outside the café with the name of a Brussels firm on it and with "*à vendre*" chalked on it. The haggling goes on for a long time. A Frenchman buys it in the end.

The papers say you can take only 40 kg. of luggage per person by train. I ought to go and look at the mobs at the Gare d'Austerlitz.

Hurray! the bookstalls on the quai are open again; oh, but why rejoice? For even though Paris looks more normal again, isn't it because the Germans are sticking to their usual one-thing-at-a-time rule? Just now they are clearly concentrating on trapping the Anglo-Franco-Belgian army in Belgium and Flanders.

Lovely day on the Seine. It's queer to see workmen busy completing the pedestal of one of the statues of the Pont-du-Louvre. The Fifth Column perhaps want to make Paris look spick and span for the Führer, what? Walk through the Tuileries. How lovely it all looks with the Arc de Triomphe in the distance, and the fountains still playing in the gardens; it is hot in the sun and there is a smell of grass and box hedge. Only very few people are about, and hardly any children. I look at the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel—" *Embarquant à Boulogne l'Armée française menaçait l'Angleterre. Prise de Vienne . . . coalition dissoute . . . etc.*" It makes me wonder what's happening at Boulogne *to-day*.

The wireless is working very badly; but I just make out that Winston has made a most pessimistic speech about the prospects of the Allied armies in Flanders. The Channel ports, he says, are no longer utilisable



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

except at certain hours. Receive visit from Mme Benoît *mère*, who is worried to death about her son Danny, now in Belgium as a liaison agent attached to the B.E.F. I try to reassure her by saying that communications have been cut at Amiens and therefore no mails are to be expected. There are gruesome stories on the wireless of hospital ships being bombed in a Channel port. Gilbert is in a dreadful stew; can't get messages sent to London. Radio-France is the only means, but the censor's office is somewhere else, with the result that the messages are hopelessly delayed, or not sent at all. My yesterday's copy was not sent, reason unknown—perhaps the censor?

Outside the Continental I again meet Viénot. He dismisses Churchill's speech as "idiotic"; he thinks we'll have a solid front restored within twenty-four hours. I hope he's right. He says the French are fighting *north* of the Somme, and that the German wedge is going to be cut at Arras or Cambrai . . . I wonder. As far as I can see, the Germans are sending in a terrific number of infantry and are meeting with little resistance. Journalism has become impossible. That's why I'm writing this stuff to let off steam.

At the Continental I again see Comert about my Spaniard's papers. Comert thinks it's absurd they won't let foreigners leave Paris who have no reason for staying. X. is sure to be shot or handed over to Franco if Hitler gets here. "*Nous sommes un peu dans la même situation*," say I. "Yes, but you and I will have no difficulty in quitting."

There are more *emmerdements* about sending off

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

copy. One now has to wait till the censor passes it, then take it to the chief telegraph office in the rue de Grenelle, stand in a queue and wait while the words are counted, and pay cash. I haven't any. So the paper can whistle till they send me some. I wired them for money three days ago.

At the War Office conference Colonel Thomas recites his piece. I ask him if the junction of the two armies can still be made. "*On fera l'impossible*," says he doubtfully. John Elliott of the *Herald-Tribune* says he wrote an article to-day in which he used the phrase "super-Sedan"; the phrase was, of course, cut out by the censor. He thinks 750,000 troops have been encircled—or are going to be. Churchill is supposed to have said that fighting was going on to-day in the streets of Boulogne; so that's the answer to my earlier question after looking at the Arc du Carrousel this morning. The "Abbeville wedge" is apparently spreading north like the dickens. The bridges on the Somme have been blown up; even if the Anglo-Franco-Belgian army retreated, it mightn't get south of the Somme: pretty? Winston's speech is apparently going to be cut by the French censorship; the French War Office openly admit it! General Billotte is said to have been killed.

Earlier to-day at the Continental I talked to the lame man—Comert's assistant. He said he was delighted with Winston's pessimistic speech. "We've had enough optimist speeches. Gloomy speeches are good for whipping up the people."—(It's all right if the pessimism doesn't correspond too closely to the facts). I also saw St. Exupéry as he was leaving the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Continental; the lame man tells me St. Exupéry flew over the German lines to-day and got his machine riddled with bullets; God, if only there were more St. Exupérys in the world! I read his last book in Glasgow last summer—it gave me a strange *frisson*—a fresh faith in a great French human tradition, *panache*, and all that. But how much of it is left? What is one St. Exupéry to a million Chautemps? Hasn't pacifism rotted the guts of the French soul? Sometimes I wish France had gone monarchist; if it hadn't been for that ass La Rocque and the *Action Française* gangsters it might have worked.

The French are still hoping to organize a continuous Front from the Somme to the Vosges and beyond. But *can* this war be fought on 1914-18 lines? And what if the whole B.E.F. is encircled, and with it, a good part of the French Army? Won't the French consider peace terms, and can England go on fighting alone? Will there not be a Thiers-Gambetta split?

At the hotel, the *patronne* and her daughter-in-law—whose husband is in Belgium—are very upset at my news. Mme Charpentier, the large-mouthed Frenchwoman, holds forth loudly and angrily against Daladier, Gamelin, the newspaper ballyhoo and the British intelligence service who were so badly caught napping in Norway. She is also angry because Reynaud went to Mass at Notre Dame. She says she stands for *liberté de conscience* but "since Reynaud isn't a practising Catholic, why should he go to Notre Dame and not go to the *temple protestant* or the synagogue? They also have been saying prayers for France!" The good old anti-clerical spirit is still going strong! And

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

she still distrusts Weygand: "He supported the 6th of February gang. He's a Fascist at heart." She's rather inconsistent; but she's very amusing talking about Germans: "*C'est des cochons. Une race à part. Je les ai vus en Suisse. Comme ils bouffent!*" (Imitates noise they make with their soup spoons.) She doesn't think the British Army is much good; "*vous êtes des marins*"; she ridicules Chamberlain *avec sa feuille de papier*, also Daladier and the Norwegians—and "*le roi Haakon le bien nommé.*" I don't see why she should have this spite against Haakon and I warmly defend him. The women all agree that France can't accept separate peace: "*on sera bouffé après les Anglais; on sera envoyé dans des camps de concentration, ou au Sahara. Là, au moins, on sera tranquille.*" It's all very depressing. They ask me if the French Army isn't still very strong; I say it is. But I add: one shouldn't have been so contemptuous about the Poles; they were up against the same problems as we are now. And so to bed. We'll go on having peaceful nights in Paris, I think, until the Huns get Flanders. After that——?

*Friday, 24th May.*

Kolya gave me yesterday a half-price ticket for the Foire de Paris, the annual trade fair at the Porte de Versailles. It was opened on 11th May. He says it's as dead as mutton, but is still being carried on for prestige. I wonder if I should go—it would be quite original.

Poor little Kolya! He is a typical child of the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Russian emigration. He has quite a veneer of culture which he inherited from his father, is well-read and has slightly aristocratic manners. When, just from school, he arrived in France, he cultivated a set of young Russian poets at Montparnasse; adopted semi-artistic airs, and a taste for jazz, the cinema and mildly eccentric clothes. He even wrote some verse in the "decadent" style of the early 'twenties, and acted as an extra in two or three night-life films, full of apaches and Russian dukes and princes. But then the lean years came, and Kolya, abandoning his poetic and screen ambitions, was reduced to touting typewriters. But his heart is still in the generous, glamorous world of the early 'twenties.

Last night I saw a barge of refugees sailing up the Seine. The old people looked dejected; the young, on the contrary, seemed excited at the sight of the Louvre, etc.; they had perhaps never seen Paris before. I couldn't sleep till 3 a.m. Was thinking of all the folks in Britain. Pity if I never saw them again. I thought a lot of F. and little Nancy and remembered how I took her to the zoo in the Bois de Vincennes, and how she called the monkeys "numpies." I also thought of the Dundee evacuees with their song: "When the war is over, Hitler *shall* be dead." He—or they? What's this about Hitler's secret weapon against England he mentioned in his Danzig speech last autumn? Couldn't we produce one too? The recipe for one of them has been lying, so they say, in the archives of the British War Office since 1875, or something—but it's "too frightful" to have been used so far. I wake up from a bad dream: Hitler

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

strutting into Piccadilly Corner House or something. Oswald Mosley and cronies stand up and *heil*-Hitler; I say evasively to Hitler: "I think we've met somewhere before." He gives me a dirty look and says "*Jawohl!*" Gilbert comes to get an interview from him for his paper. Hitler is very rude to him; Gilbert raises his eyebrows and talks to him ironically, as he sometimes talks to Gaby when she gets disorderly.

Queer still to have *café au lait* in bed. It's a warm day. The papers are quite incomprehensible in their military comments; Winston's speech is expurgated. I go and see old Prof. Pontoy. He is gloomy, though his news from Etienne is good. Etienne is in the Air Force in an observation balloon in Lorraine, Toul way; says he is longing to see some real fighting. In his sector all is quiet, except for air-raid alarms every night. I tell Jean Pontoy about the defeatist stuff I've been hearing. He thinks Lebrun "*un mou,*" —"*drôles d'influences de ce côté-là.*" He tries to talk confidence—but doesn't sound very convincing, poor dear. He says he was to have gone to London this week about the Anglo-French "educational *entente*" but it doesn't seem to interest anybody any longer. We go in a taxi to his house in Passy to lunch. On the way he tells a story of his meeting with Foch and Weygand in 1918, when the evacuation of the Channel ports and the withdrawal to the Somme were considered. Foch decided against Haig's proposal; he said he would fight for Dunkirk, and then for Calais, and then for Boulogne, but he wouldn't have a general retreat. So the Somme Front is not perhaps quite

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

unfeasible. Only, aren't the conditions different? There's still an appalling tendency to think of the war in 1914 terms.

Mme Pontoy looks rather melancholy; says she hopes we'll all be more cheerful next time we meet. There's another man at lunch; forget his name. He says the railway communications with the Somme are very difficult: the great railway junction of Creil has been bombed to hell. (It used to be so nice to roar through Creil in the boat train: it meant: Paris in half an hour.) Mme Pontoy reads out a letter from a friend in Normandy who is in charge of a refugees' *centre d'accueil*: the refugees told her fearful stories of machine-gunning; whole families wiped out; many others wounded; the hatred of the Huns, she says, is terrific among all the people. Old Pontoy thinks that if everything breaks down he'll go to Martinique or Guadeloupe—the only French possessions which the U.S.A. at least won't let the Germans take! He and I take the metro back from the rue de la Pompe to Havre-Caumartin; the metro is crowded, and as smelly as it always is in Paris in hot weather. Very few people are reading papers—no wonder; there's nothing in them these days.

Thank heaven my two months' salary has come; not that I thought that the paper would let me down; but the post is in such a mess. I can now advance some for wires. I write pieces for the paper and the Sunday paper. I ask Mr. Putty to buy sticky paper for the office windows. On the way back from the damned telegraph office in the rue de Grenelle, I drop in for a *café-crème* at the rue de Bellechasse café,

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

where thirteen years ago I did my seduction stuff on Betty—or vice-versa. Life was nice and simple in those days. She's back in the States now, plain and fortyish, looking after her large litter of children and probably not caring two hoots about any of us.

Mr. Putty who lives out at Maisons Laffitte says the trains on the suburban lines have practically stopped; there are only two to-night—one at six and one at 11.30. He doesn't know how to get home; the railways are being kept free for refugees and soldiers. He also tells an alarming story that since the breakthrough on the Meuse thousands of deserters have been arriving in the suburbs. Oh, not just Communists: anybody.

It's a lovely afternoon; I've sent off my copy, and there's nothing much to do. So I walk back to the Opéra through the old streets north of the Louvre. On the face of it, everything still seems quiet and normal. I cross the Place des Victoires; the sandbags round Louis XIV have collapsed; I wander along the rue de Richelieu, past the National Library. I used to live round here, back in 1922, when I worked for my M.A. thesis at the Bibliothèque, looking up old files of the *Journal des Débats* for 1830, and the early issues of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, with the same salmon covers, and with contributions from George Sand, and Alfred de Musset and Jules Janin. What a long time ago that was! I lived then in a little hotel in the rue St.-Roch owned by old M. Champion, a dour old lad, and his sweet old thing of a wife. They had lost both their sons in the war, but they



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

still had Coco the green parrot, who lived in a cage in their musty *bureau* on the first floor. Mme Champion was very proud of Coco, and claimed he was 140 years old; "*né avant notre Grande Révolution.*" If true, Coco was the only living creature I had met who was born in the eighteenth century. A few years ago I dropped in to see M. and Mme Champion. "Papa" had died, she said, shaking her head. But Coco—he was still there, and was still screeching "*Bonjour Coco.*" What reminded me so vividly of the old Champions to-day was a familiar sound that suddenly caught my ear when I was crossing the Place Gaillon—

*Very Slow*



An old-clothes woman, with a red, weather-beaten face, and wearing a tattered green jersey was singing her old street cry of Paris. I remembered old Champion's hotel. I used to be wakened in the morning by this street cry. In those days it was still the old, old

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Paris; there weren't in 1922 one quarter as many cars in the Paris streets as there are now.

. . . . .

I don't want to be a soldier  
I don't want to go to war,  
I'd rather stay at home,  
Where round the streets I'd roam  
And live upon the earnings of a—lady typist.  
I do not wish a bayonet — — —  
I do not wish — — — shot away;  
I'd rather live in England, in merry, merry England,  
And eat and drink and sleep my life away.

Gilbert sang it at the Quai Voltaire restaurant to-night. The only time I heard it sung was a few weeks ago by a bunch of tipsy R.A.F. boys in Montmartre; it's a good song. Gilbert says it was very famous when he was in the last war: I wonder if the last war hadn't a certain *dynamisme* this one distinctly lacks. We don't even hate the Huns properly as we did in the last war. The papers are genteel; and so is the B.B.C. with Herr Hitler this and Herr Hitler that.

We have an amusing dinner—Gilbert refrains from talking about the war, and even about his experiences in the last war—which had always been his favourite subject. Instead, he talks about the goldfish Popeye he loved so much it ate out of his hand. Once when it was ill he dashed home in a taxi and took it to the vet, and fed it on castor oil and so made it live another week. He also quotes cases of the supernatural in his life. When I talk of war he ticks me off for flogging

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

dead horses. He admits, however, that he has lost 2 kg. in the last fortnight. He has a jaundiced kind of look.

While Gilbert and I were at the War Office conference, Cosandier the chauffeur, had gone to fetch Gaby at a bar in the rue Pierre Charron off the Champs-Élysées. The place was almost deserted; but a solitary pianist was playing: "I can't give you anything but love, baby." I'm glad the paper has sent me money; I'll have no excuse for beating it even if Paris is bombed to hell and I am scared stiff. Moral duty to my paper, etc.

There was nothing startling at the War Office conference. The French deny the British story that Boulogne has been taken by the Germans. They claim that there is still a French garrison at Boulogne. There are violent battles round Valenciennes, Cambrai, Arras—battles which, we are told, may last for days. In Belgium and Flanders the Allied armies are retreating. I still have an uncomfortable feeling that the German grip is tightening round the Flanders army. Gilbert thinks the German wedge is now being shelled from two sides; I think he's wrong.

*Saturday, 25th May.*

I am sitting at the window at 8 p.m. looking out on to the Louvre. I am feeling better than I've felt for days. I've just come back from Reggie Maynard's cocktail party; both he and Kneller are confident that things are going far better; that Weygand has

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

organized his Somme front; that the Flanders and Somme armies will, within the next twenty-four or forty-eight hours, join and cut the German pincer, and that Hitler made a mistake in not attacking Paris on 16th May when nothing would have stopped him from getting here. I hope they're right, though it seems to me that too much time has already been lost; we have heard about the pincer being cut "in the next twenty-four hours" for nearly a week. Bernard Trunel of the Ministry of Commerce, who was there, discussed Hitler's economic acquisitions in Holland, Belgium and the North of France. He said the petrol stores in Holland had largely been destroyed by the R.A.F.; and that the Dutch had only 600,000 tons anyway. The Belgian industries suffered for months from a great shortage in raw materials, so the Germans didn't get much there, either. England was now in possession of the Belgian and Dutch gold. The coal pits in Belgium are mostly flooded; but he admits that the seizure by the Germans of the Pas-de-Calais mines is a serious blow to French industry; France will have to import a devil of a lot of coal. However, it was the same in the last war; and we have got hold of a lot of Dutch, Belgian and Norwegian shipping.

Mme Géraud was there. She said she spent the afternoon at the Hôtel Matignon—the Premier's office, now turned into a centre for refugees. She tells the story she heard from some refugees of how a German 'plane was brought down—the pilot was a boy of 17. When he crashed he had his right arm and one of his legs broken; but he still continued to work his machine-gun with his left hand, mowing

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

down more refugees. In the end the infuriated refugees killed him; but while they were finishing him off, he went on shouting *Heil Hitler*. Beastly—though the Germans would no doubt think it a grand story. The hatred of the Germans among the refugees is appalling. It occurs to me that if Hitler wanted separate peace he shouldn't have aroused French hatred like this.

Mme Géraud says Hitler is not bombing Paris "*parce qu'il veut s'y installer*." André (Pertinax) saw Gamelin two days ago: "He is very serene," Mme Géraud says, "and is waiting for the time when he can justify himself." How? Presumably by writing two volumes *chez Plon*.

Bullitt, the United States Ambassador, says there are five million refugees on the roads of France and Belgium.

Had lunch with Anne MacDonald who lives with her old mother in a little bungalow out at Antony. She says they are visited every night by German 'planes; one of them was brought down the other night—there was a terrific explosion, which made the bungalow shake; but the windows were left intact.

Romier in the *Figaro* to-day claims that even if the Flanders army is isolated, it will represent a formidable force in effectives, material and in "what it gets by sea." It seems absurd. What CAN they get by sea if Boulogne and Calais are German? I am rather puzzled about Italy and Spain. Are we trying to buy Italy—and, if so, at what price? (There's a story around that Laval has gone to Rome; but I don't

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

think it's true. Reynaud actually proposed to send Laval to Rome; but Musso refused to see any French envoy, *even* Laval.) What's Sam Hoare doing in Madrid?

Colonel de Gaulle, who wrote that important book on the mechanized army which I discussed in the paper when it came out in '35, is reported missing. Daladier couldn't bear him. General Giraud has been taken prisoner by the Nazis. Damned nuisance. General Billotte has been killed; though not by a bomb, as was reported at first, but in a motor smash. Is it true that the panic, the *affolement* of a week ago has passed?

*Sunday, 26th May.*

I was wakened by terrific gunfire about 6 a.m. I thought at first it was still last night's thunderstorm. I had sat in the little Quai Voltaire restaurant, and behind a veil of heavy rain lilac flashes of lightning were lighting up the book boxes on the parapets, and the Louvre and the Tuileries beyond. I went to sleep again till 10 o'clock; *petits pains au lait* for breakfast—Sunday treat? General Duval in the *Journal* still emphasizes the separation between the Flanders and Somme armies, but recommends the fullest confidence in Weygand's orders. Weygand flew to the Flanders army two days ago. He went in a 'plane which was shot at, and returned by sea aboard a destroyer, which also was attacked. Has the French Army Command really anything up its sleeve?—or is it just trying to keep the spirits up? Yester-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

day General Duval was snooty about "arm-chair strategists" who were amateurishly concluding that the Flanders army had been encircled.

*"Félix Grat, député mort au champ d'honneur. Chercheur infatigable, il avait découvert des manuscrits inconnus de classiques latins—Horace, Quintilien . . . Maître des conférences à la Sorbonne depuis 1928."*

I am quoting the *Petit Parisien* obit of the first French Member of Parliament to be killed. Symbolic? Græco-Roman civilization crushed under the Nazi heel?

Sunday morning in Paris. The streets are rather empty. I am sitting in a café at the Carrefour de l'Odéon. I've just been looking at Danton's statue. On it are the words: "*De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace.*" Who has got it now, we or they? I recall Milford's remark on Gamelin: "he is so safe." I wonder if Gamelin's apologia will consist in saying: "the troops were sent to Belgium and the Northern Line was weakened against my better judgment at British insistence." Duroc explained to me that the offer made to the Belgians in January was: Either we take charge of the Albert Canal or we don't come in at all. What was done now was neither one thing nor the other. "Hence the crossing of the Meuse by the Huns and the breach in the 'extension' of the Maginot Line." Only I don't understand the "*hence*" at all; if the French have really got five million troops, they didn't really need to take any

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

troops from the line, and moreover, was Gamelin the supreme boss, or wasn't he? If he was so opposed to going into Belgium, he should have said No, or resigned.

Charles Morice in the *Petit Parisien* is more reassuring to-day than he has been for a long time. An old bearded man with a fine face, accompanied by another old, blind man comes up, begging for money: "We have come all the way from Charleroi," he explains. Damn the Huns.

I go on to the "Dominique," the Russian bar in Montparnasse. Walk there from the Odéon through the Luxembourg gardens. The rhododendrons are in full bloom. Same waiters at the "Dominique", same blackboards with the menu written out elaborately in decorative coloured chalk. The place is fairly empty. The waiters talk among themselves about the "panic in Paris" and refer to all the orders which have been cancelled in the last few days. After lunch I have a look at Rodin's Balzac and walk down the Boulevard Raspail. No buses. The Notre-Dame-des-Champs metro is closed; so I take a taxi to the office.

No English papers are to be got in Paris, though the *Evening Standard* (3 francs) still gets here somehow by 'plane. London still seems strangely normal compared with Paris; the paper is full of trivialities, and there are twelve or fourteen pages of it. Here there are only two pages. Geneviève Tabouis' stuff in the *Œuvre* is now printed in microscopic type; no wonder, considering the length of her daily *roman-feuilleton*, as Marion calls it. Marion has, by the way,



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

lately raked up a tune, which she keeps on singing: "The love bug will bite you if you don't watch out." She's got a pretty jazz sense.

I was glad to discover that Radio-France have at last agreed to take Press telegrams "collect." Wrote a piece for the paper.

Basil arrives; I am delighted to see him; I had wondered for days if he hadn't been killed in all those bombings of the R.A.F. aerodromes. He is being transferred to England.

At the War Office to-night Geoffrey Cox said that according to the Columbia Broadcast the Wilhelmstrasse declared to some diplomat in Berlin that the Germans would to-morrow start using Hitler's secret weapon—"as there was danger of the front becoming stabilized." Colonel Thomas says nothing interesting. Two attacks on Valenciennes were repulsed, etc. He gives no indication of the state of the German "pocket" north of the Somme. He says the citadel of Boulogne was still in French hands to-day; and the Germans are "nowhere near Calais yet." Charles Morice of the *Petit Parisien* says that the Germans have demolished a "very important station on the P.L.M. *réseau*" by using Belgian bombers. The French thought they were Allied 'planes; so no alarm was sounded. A swinish trick. Regarding this morning's raid on Paris, Colonel Thomas denied that six bombers had been brought down; he heard only of one; but even about this there was no definite confirmation. I wonder if anti-aircraft guns are any real use in big raids? (We always hear of

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the R.A.F. doing wonders "despite heavy A.A. fire.")

Basil and I go for dinner to Paul's in the Ile de la Cité. Roast duck and cucumber salad, *robuchon*, *confiture* and lots of *beaujolais*. Basil is in increasingly good form (no wonder). He talks about his latest R.A.F. experiences; for instance, how, driving out of Reims he was nearly missed by a bomb. He objects to the R.A.F. mess tea, strong and sweet. "How these people can prefer it to red wine!" says he, ordering a third bottle of *beaujolais*. There follows a long discussion on whether the British Government is right to keep the home air defences intact at the present juncture instead of throwing every 'plane it possesses into the French battle. Until quite recently there were only very few R.A.F. squadrons in France. Everything really turns round the question whether France can still be saved. Basil thinks there is still a good chance; and that we ought to do our damndest. He feels strongly about it; loses his temper, bangs the table—dear old Basil. We then discuss the question of the 17-year old Nazi airman who went on shooting down refugees till they inflicted a "heroic" death upon him. "That's not moral courage, that's only animal courage," says Basil. "Anybody else's human instincts, except those of the Germans would rebel against the kind of bestial training that is inculcated into him." Basil thinks the *morale* in Paris is much worse than at the Front, or at least in the little village where his squadron was latterly stationed.

He then gets very angry and bangs the table at

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the mention of Nevile Henderson. We agree that the book, with its slobbering over nice man Goering and nice lady Mrs. Goering is as good as any Nazi propaganda. No wonder the French Ministry of Information refused to encourage its publication in book form; though it *did* appear as a serial in *Paris-Soir*. But then one never knows what Prouvost, its owner, is really up to.

While we were at Paul's restaurant a loud cannonade was going on. Nobody bothered. A.R.P. wardens blew whistles at the lighted windows; the brightest of these was one in the Palais de Justice across the street.

I walk home along the Seine; there is a starry sky. I go to buy cigarettes in the little *bistrot* in the rue de Beaune. Have a talk with two soldiers, one from the Finistère, the other from Marseilles. They both think "*on les aura quand-même.*" Both try to speak a little English. I say facetiously that if it comes to the worst I may have to sail to Wales in an onion boat from Roscoff. The Breton's face lights up. "Why, that's where I come from." We reminisce about Roscoff and then, after buying them calvados, and smoking a couple of their *troupe* cigarettes, I go home. At the War Office conference to-night the rumour was mentioned that Bonnet and Flandin had been sent to a concentration camp. Too good to be true.

*Monday, 27th May.*

Met Anne MacDonald at the Gare d'Orsay where she had gone to get tickets for Orléans; in spite of the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

mess on the railways, old Mrs. MacDonald is still determined to go for the day to visit her other daughter who's in a home. I got Mr. Putty to fix up the Press telegraph cards—what a bother. Then went to the Embassy Press conference, presided over by Childs, the new Press attaché, Mendl's successor. Mendl has vanished—gone south or somewhere. I also met there Johnstone, of the Ministry of Information, who has just succeeded the Fagg menage. Mme Fagg with her Célimène airs, which got everybody's goat departed one day with great suddenness from the Continental where she had sat enthroned since September, and Walt came rolling after. It was hard lines on old Walter Fagg, who is quite a decent old boy; and though he had never been a *fonctionnaire*, he knew France better than most of the British liaison people, and he had a large number of contacts, especially in the *bien pensant* and French Academy milieu—a milieu which nobody else in the British Press really knew. He also knew the theatre thoroughly, and has a pretty style. But Mme Fagg was a bad case of M. of I. amateurishness and self-importance, and she did him a lot of harm with her airs. I don't think she was really *méchante*; but she gave many people that impression.

The discussion at the Press conference clearly suggests that we are about to face a period of difficult Anglo-French relations. It's unfortunate; but it deepens some of my doubts about Weygand, on the one hand, and on the other, my suspicions about Winston's reluctance to gamble with the R.A.F. in an endeavour to save France. Weygand is clearly un-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

willing to start a big offensive north of the Somme, and is inclined to write off the Flanders army as a dead loss. The British are, of course, worried to death about the B.E.F., the Channel ports, the threatened paralysis of the port of London, the control of the Straits of Dover, and they don't feel like sending a great many troops or 'planes to the Somme. So Hitler can play a double game; threaten the French with an attack on Paris, and threaten the English with an attack on London. The French are now saying "*France d'abord*," while the English are saying "England first." Clever, eh?

The Flanders army is rapidly being driven into the sea; Calais is lost, Arras, too. It's appalling, this rift between England and France. Can one blame Weygand for not having attempted to cut the German corridor which a few days ago was only twenty miles wide? Perhaps the French would have been wiped out again. But, after all, they still had two thousand tanks: why didn't they concentrate them somewhere for a big counter-offensive, instead of scattering them all over the place? It seems hard on England; the blasted "corridor" is now like a *salle des fêtes*, about 100 miles wide. Arras, Béthune, Lens, Boulogne, Calais (?), Valenciennes—everything gone. The stretch between Dunkirk and Ostend seems about the only thing left—and it's being bombed to hell at that. Harold Cardozo was at the conference; what a pompous bloke he is with his rows of decorations, including those he got from General Franco. Geoffrey makes some cracks about it. The chap who writes that optimistic stuff in the *Continental Daily*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Mail* was also there. His war stories make the men of the B.E.F. very angry.

I sent a short piece to the paper; talked in it about the German bluff, the purpose of which is to prevent the British from sending troops and a lot of 'planes to the Somme, lest England were to be invaded by parachutists. It's hard lines on England: for the French swore by all that was holy that the bloody Maginot Line would hold. God! with all the tripe we've been hearing about it, the French might at least admit that this *débâcle* is their fault.

I hear there is great agitation in "political quarters" in favour of Laval becoming Foreign Minister. Surely, Reynaud can't agree to that; though, with Mme de Portes' very curious influence as strong as it is, almost anything is possible. The "Latin bloc" enthusiasts in the Press keep on suggesting that the Italians want to keep France more or less intact for the sake of a France-Italy-Spain versus Germany balance of power scheme—only where does England come in? The answer is: she doesn't come in at all. The separate-peace implications of all this are pretty clear and there seems to be quite a lot of anti-British scheming going on "in certain political quarters," as we journalists say. Old Lebrun is mixed up with it all; and Ybarnégaray and his pro-Franco friends are not entirely above suspicion. And they seem to have some pull with old Pétain who was himself under Franco's influence all this last year in Spain. And then there's Baudouin, a very dark horse, who last year went to Italy on a secret mission. He was sent

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

there by Bonnet, and he has gone back since. There's been a lot of talk on these lines in the Chamber lobbies.

On to the War Office Press conference. Colonel Thomas half-admits the loss of Calais; and the juncture of the Somme and Flanders armies is no longer even mentioned. Colonel Thomas says that the main German attack is directed against the Belgians to-day. The Belgians are in full retreat towards the sea. On leaving the War Office I see Weygand and Pétain (the latter in mufti) leaving the building after an important conference. Marion and Kolya and I have dinner in the little restaurant on the quai. Then on to the Café Flore. Picasso is there, dark jealous mistress and all. Marion is fascinated by his rough Spanish peasant face. I explain at some length my latest Anglo-French theories to Handler of the U.P. He is very pessimistic, and can't understand how an army of one million men can just be thrown to the dogs. He says he has evacuated his French girlfriend, the sword swallower (we call her that, because she was once an acrobat) to Perpignan; she has gone there together with Paddy Roy's wife.

*Tuesday, 28th May.*

Slept badly, having had two omelettes, one at lunch and another at dinner. There was nothing else at the damned *bistrot* except rabbit entrails. I woke up at six o'clock; it was raining outside. I ordered breakfast at 7.30, read the *Journal* with inconclusive tripe by General Duval. The paper announced in the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Stop-Press that Reynaud would broadcast at 8.30; what a queer hour. I went downstairs to hear the speech. "*Un évènement grave s'est produit cette nuit*," he said. The Belgian Army had capitulated unconditionally on orders from Leopold; the French and British Armies were going on with their fight round Dunkirk. Leopold had not even consulted the French and British Army leaders. The *patronne*, with the son in the Flanders army, began to weep. Reynaud: "*Nous pensons surtout à nos soldats*." So do I. I think of the B.E.F. boys; also of Daniel Benoît and of Paul N. (how glad he was to have got attached to the B.E.F. as a liaison officer!) God, I always thought Leopold a bad egg; pro-Nazi, pro-Degrelle, pro-Mussolini; and he did a lot of dirty work during the Abyssinian business with his "mystery visit" to London. The Hoare-Laval plan followed soon after. The B.E.F. people say he has a German mistress supplied by the Gestapo—I heard them say so long ago. I call Leopold a *salaud*. An elderly Belgian refugee in the hall objects: "*Il ne faut pas employer des gros mots*," he says; and talks of "past errors" in '35, '36, '37, etc. I say: "In January we proposed . . ." "January," he says, "was too late. The Germans would just have marched in." Did Reynaud call him deliberately Leopold II all the time—a bloke whose number was not worth remembering? Reynaud concluded with something about "*notre grand Weygand . . . Somme, Aisne . . . victoire*." He made no mention of England, except that he referred to the B.E.F. in Belgium.

After all, Leopold mightn't have surrendered if



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Weygand wasn't staying behind the Somme; still, it was a dirty trick to play on the French and British. Well; I suppose he'll be back in his royal palace complete with German girl friend. Albert was a better bloke. I thought Leopold's messages to the defenders of Liège and Namur disgusting: "*je suis fier de vous.*"

At the price of how many British and French lives in Belgium are we going to have a few more peaceful days in Paris? Curious to think that the Italians are now paying compliments in their Press to the military valour of the French. Do they want the French to sell out England to them and to the Huns? And what *was* the basis on Friday and Saturday of Viénot's confidence in the junction of the Flanders and Somme armies? Did Weygand promise an offensive north of the Somme and then change his mind?

It rained; I walked down the quai, and across the Place de la Concorde to the Embassy. A group of people stood in front of Albert I's statue in the Place de la Concorde—*le roi chevalier*. I remembered how Leopold came for the unveiling a few days after Munich. He behaved very standoffishly to the French and took the train back to Brussels the same day, almost without seeing anybody. He hates the British and French. Later to-day there was an official ceremony, complete with Pierlot—they put flowers and black crepe on the statue. I learned that Pierlot and Spaak saw Leopold two days ago somewhere near Ostend—they said that if things got critical he must follow them to France or England. He replied:

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

"Like hell I will," and asked them to stay with him—presumably to come to terms with the Huns. He was not going to leave Belgium. Was that the reason why the Flanders armies couldn't retreat fast enough to the south? Later it was learned that the Germans were placing a château in Belgium at his disposal for services rendered.

At the Chamber this afternoon the deputies keep a stiff upper lip; they are violently annoyed with Leopold. Their anger has killed their fear.

I don't see anybody at the Embassy this morning except Jack Sandford to whom I say a lot, but who tells me very little. I draw his attention to the *Journal* story about Italy wanting France for her balance of power scheme against Germany; England not mentioned. He remarks that that's what some of Paul Faure's Socialists have been talking about—particularly Brunet with his "European arrangement without England." I miss Oliver Harvey who has just had to go out; but I run into Malet, the Ambassador's secretary, who looks very upset; "nice kettle of fish," he says.

It is still raining. I go on to Reggie Maynard's office near the Madeleine. *Paris-Midi* is on the kiosks, with big headlines all over the front page about Reynaud's morning broadcast, and with an article about the "powerful Weygand line." Reggie and a *Daily Mail* war correspondent talk about Leopold; he was at Eton with them; they thought he'd have more of the old school tie spirit. The atmosphere is very despondent; everybody is indulg-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

ing in artificial humorousness. Reggie says he based his optimism on Saturday on some strategic operation which has since fallen through owing to the fall of Dunkirk. "Oh really?" I say. "So Dunkirk has gone too?" Reggie says that indeed it has, and that the B.E.F. and the eight French divisions are completely isolated from the sea. No hope of re-embarkation.

On to the office where I find that several of last week's *Manchester Guardians* have arrived—and also of the week before. Except for air mail, which still functions moderately well, postal communications with England have been a hopeless mess since 15th May. I also go out to buy the *New Statesman*—with my censored article in it. Oddly enough, they've got a few copies on the kiosks. I wonder how many more articles I'll ever get into the *N.S.*? This one is melancholy enough, talking about the invasion of France by the Martians. It's a job getting anything over to England nowadays. I write a message about Leopold, and about Weygand's failure to cut the German wedge north of the Somme; but am informed two hours later by Radio-France that atmospheric conditions are hopeless, and that it is quite uncertain when it will get to London. Of course, the telephone hasn't been restored either. What fun to be a journalist these days.

Picquart is not looking forward to the bombing of Paris, and to "shivering in bed," as he did night after night in Madrid and Barcelona. "Didn't you go into the cellar?" "No, I am a fatalist about such things; I am an old man." (It occurs to me that it must be

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

good to be as religious as he is for such occasions.) I listen to Pierlot's broadcast; hot stuff about the King's unconstitutional conduct.

On to the Continental, where I see about my travel permit; and then on to the War Office. I am late for the Press conference; but in the hall I meet Duroc who takes me into the garden at the back of the War Office. We walk up and down the gravel path, and talk. A pretty and quiet garden, with green lawns, rather like the gardens of the embassies in this Faubourg-St.-Germain district. He thinks the French will be able to hold Weygand's Somme-Aisne front for "quite a time." "But we shan't know for some days yet what exactly we are going to be up against; what the Germans have lost in the way of tanks and 'planes in the present battle round Dunkirk. We must wait for the end of the Flanders campaign." "For them," Duroc continues, "the game is up. There is very little chance of any repatriation by sea." He adds that the fighting qualities of the British troops are admirable, and that there are eight French divisions in Flanders, among the best equipped; Germany may capture a lot of good new equipment—a great nuisance that. "The reports from Switzerland and Yugoslavia show," says Duroc, "that the German casualties are terrific. Everywhere the hospitals are packed." "What about the French casualties?" "Not high," he replies glibly. "And what about the air attacks?" Duroc claims that air bombings create very small casualties, and quotes the case of two hundred men who for three days were under constant air-bombing; result: two killed. (I wonder.)

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

But he says it has a terrible effect on the nerves. During all the raids on towns and villages in France in the last fortnight there were only 750 killed. The trouble is that bombers seem to have an infinite capacity for creating panic among the French troops, who forget that some of the artillery barrages in the last war were far more deadly. And yet, the troops did not bolt each time one of them started.

We talk about Leopold—I ask if his girl friend was really supplied by the Gestapo? Duroc says she's German. "She is a lovely woman," he says, "though a complete ass. I doubt whether, with her brains, she *can* be in the service of the Gestapo." "Is it true," I ask, "that Belgium declared that a strengthening of the 'extension' would be an unfriendly act?" "Yes, but we shouldn't have listened."

Marion 'phones up to say she walked down the rue de la Paix to-day to see if Cartier, the jeweller, had still Leopold's picture in his window; no fear—Leopold has been replaced by our Queen Mary.

*Wednesday, 29th May.*

Slept for nine hours or so; and am feeling much better. Wonder how much sleep our troops in the north have been getting over this last fortnight? An uneventful day in Paris. The papers are still talking about *la trahison du Roi des Belges*. Maeterlinck in an interview with Havas at Lisbon says that it's the German blood in Leopold that has come out. The whole thing, he suggests, was premeditated. Meet Reggie at Viel's. He now says that Dunkirk is still

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

in our hands, and claims that a few of the British troops were sent home as long as a week ago. (If true, one may well wonder whether Leopold didn't think we were proposing to quit anyway, since Weygand wouldn't budge. There is that side to it; but still, one doesn't do these things in just *that* way. His children, who were at Poitiers, have gone off to Lisbon. Perhaps they'll meet Maeterlinck there.)

Awful to think that there are two and a half million Belgians in France—how many of them are reliable? Pierlot promises to raise an army of 300,000. Reggie is worried about French morale; and annoyed that the French Government are still arresting Communists, but not any of the other Fifth Columnists.

I spent the afternoon at the Chamber of Deputies; I hadn't been there for about a fortnight. Lots of Deputies around in the *Salle des Pas Perdus*. They are all furious about Leopold; and seem to be glad to have discovered a scapegoat for all the present misfortunes. "*La Royal Air Force est magnifique*," they say; and yet I notice a slight anti-British undercurrent. Upstairs in the *buvette*, with old Raymond still busy pouring out *demis*, I meet Marcel Déat. He is there with two or three French journalists, to whom he says quite openly: "It is better to make peace on the Somme than on the Seine; on the Seine than on the Loire; on the Loire than on the Garonne." *Tiens, tiens, tiens!* He is reluctant to talk to me; he makes, however, a few insidious remarks about the insufficiency of British support, and suggests that, after the liquidation of Dunkirk, the French will be

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

left to face Germany alone. "We were rushed into this war; we knew perfectly well that we could not help the Poles; and your people in London should have known it too. *Il fallait réfléchir un peu.* And when I wrote last year my '*Mourir pour Danzig*' article, you all denounced me as a traitor and a defeatist and *ce pauvre crétin de Daladier* joined in the chorus. *Maintenant vous êtes bien servis.*" "*Evidemment, ce n'est pas très élégant ce qu'il a fait, le roi des Belges,*" M. Déat said, "*mais cependant*"—the suggestion being that in Leopold's place M. Déat would have done exactly the same thing. (It occurs to me that Henri de Man, the only Minister who associated himself with Leopold's action, is a great friend of Déat's. Déat has for years boosted his books and ideas.) The little fellow got quite worked up; and didn't seem in the least scared of being denounced to the Government.

In the lobby I had a few words with Reynaud, as he was going out. He thought the evacuation by sea of the Flanders army might yet be managed, though at a very heavy cost in human lives. He blamed Leopold for the failure of the Flanders army to retreat towards the Somme while there was still time. "There are ups and downs in wartime," he said, "and we mustn't despair. But it's very important," he added, "that we get the greatest possible support from England on the Somme." "What about Italy, *Monsieur le Président?*" He made an evasive gesture. There was a strange impassive look in his deep little Chinese eyes; but he was clearly worried. I felt tempted to repeat to him some of the defeatist talk I had heard

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

at the Chamber; but he seemed in a hurry; and what was the good, anyway? He must know about it as well as I do.

Back to the office where I write a piece for the paper. It's no use reporting the defeatist stuff—the censors will never pass it. Downstairs I play some Beethoven, who bores me with his pathos; Bach and Mozart are better and more soothing to the nerves. I also run through a few Chopin mazurkas—one gets very bored with them after a while; but it makes me think of Poland. I then play some pages of Rimsky's *Kitej*: rich, lovely, yet lucidly un-Wagnerian stuff, and with a depressingly appropriate theme—the sacred city of *Kitej* about to be invaded and destroyed by the Tartar hordes.

I then start writing a long mail article for the paper; I must try out the emergency censorship-cum-embassy-bag system. At seven I go to the embassy where I see Milford. He thinks it'll be all right if we hold out for the next two or three months. Lots of American 'planes, he says, are coming over. He feels strongly about the boys in the B.E.F., but sounds moderately optimistic. He says he always thought Leopold a bad egg. He is glad to think the French are beginning to hate the Huns as a result of the refugee stories. But he is not quite sure about French *morale*. (Neither am I.) In spite of his veneer of official optimism, he is really very worried.

Colonel Thomas, tonight pretty well admits that General Prioux's army has been cut off from the rest of the Anglo-French forces and is battling its way



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

through to the sea. Dunkirk, Gravelines and a part of Calais are still in our hands. Supplies are still reaching Dunkirk from England, and the ships have started taking some of the troops back, though with very heavy casualties. Thomas says that there were thirty-six divisions in Flanders—half of them Belgian. He dwells on the importance of the Belgian desertion; and while saying that some of the Belgian units refused to obey their King, he doesn't know how large these units are. He rather suggests that they don't amount to much. Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing have apparently been lost. The battle goes on against tremendous odds.

But what a magnificent show the French and British are putting up all the same! This demonstration that the human spirit still counts for something is very important. It may make the Boches think twice before they try to invade England.

I got a postcard from Paul Sawicki. He is still in the Polish Army camp in Brittany and not at the front, as I had expected. The Polish bloke at the hotel claims there is one Polish division in the north of France. I haven't seen any mention of it in the papers.

*Thursday, 30th May.*

Finished a long article (4,000 words) for the paper; and took it to the British censor at the Continental who left it nearly intact. He's a chap called Scott Bailey; he is the first intelligent censor I have come across since the beginning of the war. But now the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

copy has to go to the French censor; and heaven help it. On to the Embassy at 2.30. Everybody is still out at lunch; the first arrivals start at 3.30. Oh, these British lunch habits!

Appalling these eighteen French and British divisions round Dunkirk fighting against almost the whole German Army. But oh! what a magnificent demonstration that France and England are not decadent. The human spirit still means something.

Havas publishes an extraordinary story about Leopold's premeditation: his refusal to let the Belgians retreat south, so helping to trap the French and British; his attempts to get his ministers arrested and perhaps shot; his *fourberie* about the blank signature he asked Pierlot to send him from London. Gilbert thinks it all ought to be taken with a grain of salt; if Leopold was going to be *Gauleiter* why didn't he simply let the Germans through Belgium? Or did he deliberately call the British and French troops into Belgium, so that the Germans could trap them? I can't quite believe it. Still, it was rather queer, that refusal of his to go before Parliament, or even to broadcast on the day the Germans marched into Belgium. I write a short message for the paper.

Later, A.P., a Russian down-and-out I know, calls. Things being what they are, I no longer grudge him that rather old blue tweed suit he had been asking for. He tells me his boss, who owns a postage stamp shop in the rue Laffitte, has sent most of his stamps to Bordeaux. The insurance on ordinary road transport from Paris to Bordeaux has gone up to 20 centimes

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

per 1,000 francs. Funny how even the dumbest person in the world can give one a little information.

On to the War Office where in the hall I run into H. de Kerillis. He is in his usual highly emotional state. He is positive the Italians are coming in via Switzerland in order to turn the Maginot, together with the Germans. But he says: "*Tenir, tenir.*" Colonel Thomas talks of the critical situation of the Northern Army (*tu parles!*) but says the British and French Navy and Air Force are working wonders: 75 German 'planes shot down to-day. He denies very heavy British naval losses, and also the German claim that it's a "*débandade*" among the Allied troops. These German swine will sling mud even at the finest heroism. I think of all the fellows I know in the Flanders army. Later I ring up Mme N. at St.-Germain to ask for Paul; but there's no reply. General Denain's two sons have both been killed in air battles. Poor *jeunesse française*.

During dinner at the Quai Voltaire place to-night, I hear a terrific row going on at the *tabac* adjoining it, with the fat toad-like *patronne's* shrill disagreeable voice drowning everything. I ask the waitress what it's all about. She says that the *patronne's* son (aged 17), a disgusting little *voyou*—I had often seen him before—was taken off to the police station, where he was kept all afternoon, for having shouted *Heil Hitler* at a car of the Dutch Legation. I wonder if he meant it, or was just being funny.

Buré, in *L'Ordre*, to-day talks of the Fascist International Congress at Amsterdam in '35 attended by

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

O'Duffy, Degrelle and Marcel Bucard, the head of the French *Francistes*, a small nondescript group of thugs. He rightly asks: where is Bucard?

I walk down the Seine, past the Institut de France; and across the Pont-Neuf. Drop in at Paul's where I meet young Duchacek, Ripka's assistant on the Czech National Committee, and his recently acquired French wife. Duchacek still gets information from Prague; he says that the German plan is now to invade Switzerland (together with Italy) and to occupy Ireland with the help of parachutists and the I.R.A., the first great drive being against England, rather than against France. Still, he recalls that Hitler boasted that the Huns would be in Paris on 15th June and that the Austrians would be the first to march down the Champs-Élysées; "and June," he says, "is near." Duchacek says his Prague informants have so far always been right about Norway, Holland, etc. There was a bloke in Prague who in February already boasted of having been appointed Police President of Oslo. Duchacek is greatly worried about French morale, which he thinks, may go to pieces at any moment. He found even the *Europe Nouvelle* people—who have supported the Reynaud policy for years—very downcast. He also thinks there's a lot of agitation going on for the *Union Latine*.

On getting back to-night I have another long talk with Mme Charpentier, the amusing large-mouthed Frenchwoman. I tell her about the Marquise de Crussol, Daladier's girl friend—a daughter of a sardine magnate and known as *la sardine qui s'est crue sole*. She laughs her head off. She still thinks Wey-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

gand is a dangerous man—Croix de Feu, etc.; “*mais enfin, en temps de guerre*,” she reluctantly admits, “*ce n’est pas pareil*.” She nevertheless, quotes Napoleon and Boulanger to support her arguments.

In the article for the paper I stress the necessity of substantial British and especially R.A.F. support during the coming battle on the Somme. Even if the Germans have a go at England (a few bombings of London) it will be chiefly to scare England so that as little as possible is sent to the Somme by way of air and military aid. Somebody remarked at the War Office conference to-day that, according to the *Liberté*, the Second British army was on the Somme. Colonel Thomas couldn’t confirm. But I hope it’s true. The Somme must not be an exclusively French battle; it would have a very bad psychological effect if it were.

*Friday, 31st May.*

In the Tuileries this morning I discovered an old grave with a statue of Niobe, but with the name worn off with old age. Curious how one goes on discovering things in Paris. I wonder whose grave it is.

The bald old waiter in the rue Richepanse talked a lot; he said he lived in the eastern *banlieue*, Pantin way. He gets air-raids every night, but is beginning to get used to them. He was through the last war; things were much worse then. He gets his train to his *banlieue* every night. He didn’t think the Boche would come to Paris; but added on second thoughts that it was “not impossible.”

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

On to the office. Get a letter from Mme Benoît—whose husband is in the Northern army—asking me to find out about affidavits—she wants to send her child, together with two other children, to the U.S.A. I 'phone Marion and ask her to inquire at the U.S. Consulate; also ask her to dinner to-night.

The British and French are putting up a good show at Dunkirk—in so far as an organized defeat can be a good show. The Huns must have good generals when you come to think of the Sedan-Calais drive. (Or perhaps it's just that the French have such lousy ones: for what the Huns did was really *very* obvious!) Amiens and Arras have apparently been completely destroyed—including Amiens cathedral. I listen to a B.B.C. story on the arrival of the exhausted troops in a south of England port; it's distressing stuff.

At the War Office to-night they practically admit that Prioux has been taken prisoner with a large part of his army. There is certainly no news of their having reached the entrenched camp of Dunkirk.

Dinner at the "Vigne d'Alsace" with Marion, Gilbert and Gaby. Gaby insists on eating caviare. Gilbert is rather gloomy, advises Marion to put in a store of food—tinned meat, *biscottes*, tinned fruit; and also lots of chewing gum: "it stops machine-gun holes in the petrol tank, and also stops your teeth from chattering." We visualize ourselves on the road sitting round the car, chewing, chewing the stuff as hard as we can go in order to mend the bullet-riddled tank! Earlier to-day, he had offered to take Marion, as well as me and Gaby in the car, if we have to leave

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Paris. This being the end of the month, I pay him for my usual share in the use of the car.

At the War Office conference I met Graham Schultz of the *Chicago Echo*. He's a nice lad, and used to write very good stories from Finland. (There is a legend current in American newspaper offices that on his return to Sweden, where they all felt very badly about not helping Finland, he was mistaken for a Finnish war hero, and that the conscience-stricken daughter of a Swedish Cabinet Minister rewarded him accordingly.) He says that Comert at the Press conference this afternoon warned American correspondents not to rely on accommodation if there's to be an exodus from Paris; camping, he said, was the only hope.

### *Saturday, 1st June.*

Last night we had a feeling, during that precious dinner at the "Vigne d'Alsace," that we were probably living through the last days of Paris; for June, that formidable month of June, was going to start in a few hours. Well, the first day of this fateful June hasn't been too awful, after all. (*Ca peut venir*—but still, why worry yet?) Slept till 10.30; it suddenly occurred to me I ought to go to the War Office conference to get some dope for the Sunday paper. I dash down in a taxi unshaved. Colonel Thomas suggests that the Germans are taking an "unusual interest in the Somme." Of yesterday's attacks on the Somme the first few were fairly innocuous; but

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the second lot were rather more serious, complete with bombers and tanks. *Is the drive on Paris starting?* He adds that more attacks were launched at different points of the Somme front this morning. Walter Kerr and Mickey Wilson, who are there, say that there's a lot of talk of the Government moving to Tours. . . . Brr. . . . Colonel Thomas says that the evacuation of the British and French from Dunkirk is continuing satisfactorily and that the work of the Navies and the R.A.F. is "stupendous." Type an article on my portable at the hotel and take it to the censors in the rue Edouard VII, where I meet an Australian called Conrad; he had been running an English paper in Brussels. He tells some gruesome stories of bombings, and of his escape by train, which was attacked by bombers, etc. He says he's looking for a job with an English paper. I have nothing to suggest in the present mess.

I then meet Marion at Viel's. She tells me she has received an official letter from England expressing great appreciation of the French school films she got the French education people to send over. She agrees, however, that the matter is scarcely of any great interest now. As we walk down the Boulevard Capucines on my way to the bank, she stops at the Samaritaine de Luxe to admire a Bordeaux-coloured silk dressing-gown. "Lovely, isn't it?" I say I'll buy one if we win the war. Verneti the bank manager, says that the Paris banks are now being definitely evacuated. I ask what has happened to the Bank of France gold. He says one-third of it is in New York in terms of tripartite agree-



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

ment; a little is in London and most of the rest at Bordeaux.

The greater part of the Agence Havas's staff have already been moved to Tours.

Outside the post office, where I sent a wire to Mme Benoît about the evacuation of her child to America (there's a lot of red tape) I meet Tom MacGregor in W.C. rig-out. He tells me how he once hired a 'plane for £40 from London to Glasgow and back; he had a cup of tea at Craig's in Gordon Street and left again in half an hour. He's a blowhard. But he says he was at Boulogne; the Germans got in without any kind of resistance. "The French," he says, "are in an utter complete mess. I'll be much surprised if the Germans aren't here in a week." The only thing the Germans are really scared stiff of, he says, are the R.A.F. fighters. He calls the German drive from Sedan to Dunkirk and the encirclement of the B.E.F. and the French armies "the greatest victory in history." He doubts if the French are any good at all. The British, he concludes, are being let down.

Back to the office—Reggie Maynard calls. He is very depressed but says the R.A.F. will give every assistance to the French both from English bases and from Rouen. The *Temps* editorial is entitled: "*Tenir, Tenir, Tenir.*" That's all very well.

Has Weygand been given enough time for organizing his Somme-Aisne-Meuse line? If he's managed it in ten days he's done a lot better than Gamelin, who had about ten years to organize the *other* line.

Mrs. W. H. Chamberlin asked me to dinner to

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

meet Sonia Tomara, the *Herald Tribune* woman in Rome, and a Japanese. I like the Chamberlins very much, but I just can't be bothered going out all that infernal distance to Neuilly. It's such a nuisance to be caught in an air-raid, and to be driven into a shelter for hours. Besides I've got to do the W.O. conference. Dreadful: Colonel Thomas says the evacuation of Dunkirk has become much more difficult. Having brought up heavy artillery, the Germans have now, in addition to air bombing, been shelling the harbour and the ships from land. The individual tragedies implied cannot bear thinking about.

Dinner at the "Bouteille d'Or." Notre-Dame is lovelier than ever this evening. Two men and a *poule*-like woman at the next table are very noisy and jovial. I find them irritating. How can they be so cheerful? Don't know why I suspect them of being Belgian refugees; perhaps because they smoke Capstan cigarettes. After they've gone the waitress explains that they are always in good humour. All three of them are *internes des hôpitaux*—doctors, who are going off to the Front in a few days. I feel apologetic at having wronged them in thought if not in word. The waitress is a Croix de Feu woman, and is fearfully distressed. I say: "Why did you Right-wing people always treat Reynaud as a *petite fripouille*?" She admits he's turned out rather better than she expected. Whereupon she runs down Daladier—with my approval. She thinks the situation tragic. I say that at the Chamber the day the Germans crossed the Meuse "*Herriot pleurait comme un veau*." She says: "*Il ne pouvait pas pleurer autrement*." It's curious

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

how the value of Reynaud is beginning to be generally recognized by the ordinary people.

Outside, on the quai, all is still; only, rising from behind the dark outline of Notre-Dame, a searchlight is looking for Boche 'planes.

Marseilles was bombed to-day. One of the 'planes shot down crashed into the gasworks and blew it up; just the sort of extravagant thing that *would* happen at Marseilles! Why isn't Paris bombed? Do the Germans really want to get Paris intact? They dropped leaflets, the waitress to-night said, saying that the Huns would dance in the streets of Paris on the 14th of July.

In the *Populaire* Blum attributes all our misfortunes to the decision to help Belgium without any preliminary preparation. He says the French Army's progress along the coast was quite unhampered; which in itself was very suspect. Leopold, too, was very suspect. Blum argues that *because* Belgium was helped the Northern Line was weakened at Sedan. Well, *why* was it? The connection isn't clear at all. A lot of people believe there was something very fishy about the Meuse business. Only it wasn't *only* there that they broke through the line. They walked across it in the Ardennes too and all over the damned place.

At the W.O. conference I have a chat with W. Farr. He says his war commentary in the London *Daily Mail* is gloomier than the stuff in most papers; but they have to be cheery in the *Continental Daily Mail* so that the French censors pass it without delay. The paper just *must* get to the troops at a certain hour. . . .

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

If France loses this war, the censorship—which has forced this irresponsible optimism upon the Press—will be greatly to blame. The papers have been telling people for months that everything is o.k., and that victory is certain; when the blow came, people just lost their heads.

I'd probably be very scared if the bombs began to drop all over the place, but in a way I'd be almost relieved. This sparing of Paris is super-sinister. Do the Huns want to encircle Paris and trap the Government and all? In fact, on 16th or 17th May they could have taken Paris. Why didn't they? Was it that they got stuck at Rethel, where the French resistance under Gen. Delattre, was grand? Or was it done deliberately, in order to drive a wedge—both military *and psychological*—between France and England?

This evening outside the Gare d'Orsay, a policeman asked to see my papers. They've been stopping and examining people all over the place.

### *Sunday, 2nd June.*

The days drag on interminably. A week seems like a month. On my way to the W.O. conference, I met Laugier in the rue Solférino—he listened *d'un air moqueur* to my official dope. Colonel Thomas talked about the bombings of Marseilles; and the *petits coups de main sur la Somme*; he also said that the evacuation of Dunkirk was continuing, despite artillery shelling which was making it more difficult even than before.

On with Picquart to the office where I write a long piece for the paper. I seem obsessed with this Ger-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

man double pincer movement round Paris. I am positive that that'll be the next move, as soon as Dunkirk is over. Hotels and restaurants have had their 'phones cut off from to-day as an anti-spy precaution.

I go on to see my Russians. Regarding the new way the police have of stopping people in the street, old Grigoriev tells the story of how the Russian Archbishop Evlogi, complete with robes and tiara, but 82 years old, deaf and not talking a word of French, was taken off to a police station because he had no papers, till at last he was fished out by the Church officials with the help of a Russian taxi driver.

After a strenuous journey, Anne and Mrs. MacDonald have come back from Orléans, which they say is absolutely packed with refugees. The rooms are expensive, and there are none to be got. They consider the possibility of staying here under German occupation, and even invite me to stay with them as a p.g., if by any chance I get stuck. I don't much fancy the prospect: though I don't suppose the Huns will do *them* any harm—she aged 74, and Anne a painter of pictures which couldn't be called "degenerate" by the widest stretch! Hitler might even like them; they are on a level with the pictures the Germans put up in their pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exhibition. Only how can the MacDonalds get their money from England if they are under the Germans?

Gentizon's message from Rome in the *Temps* is interesting. Loudspeakers are being put up for Musso's entry-into-the-war speech. The Italian papers talk of German invincibility and the coming

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

drive on Paris. Last week's suggestions that France is going pro-Italian have been dropped. The Italians are no longer interested in Laval's mysterious visits to Lebrun.

I go downstairs and play Chopin nocturnes. No. 11 feels like the end of the world. Depressing. Also go through bits of Bach's Book II. Wonder what happened to Kagan, a little Warsaw Jew I used to know a few years ago, who played so well fugue No. 16? Starving here? Or in some filthy labour camp in the Lublin "reserved area," or whatever they call it? Who is to pay anything to Bach-Chopin-playing little Jews these days? All the budding Heifetzes and Horowitzes are condemned to starvation and death.

Duroc at the War Office tells me they're worried about the three German bridgeheads: at Amiens, Peronne and Ham. In the Peronne region there are large German infantry concentrations. He thinks the Germans will try to push towards Rouen and towards Reims: leaving Paris isolated. Pretty? He says he sees Weygand every day—he's magnificent. "One thing I can tell you," says Duroc, "the cards we've got left to play we shall play correctly." He doesn't sound very cheering. Far from it. After the conference I ask Colonel Thomas about these bridgeheads. He says he personally can't understand why *le Commandant-en-Chef* hasn't even tried to liquidate them yet; "but he has his own ideas—we don't know what they are." Gilbert says he has heard that 70,000 British soldiers have already been evacuated from

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Dunkirk. *Tant mieux*. What about the French? We must take off as many as we can; or the French will feel very bad about it.

Robert Lange, now in uniform, and attached to the W.O. in some capacity, says that the son of Mme Schreiber of whom there had been no news since 11th May, landed at Le Havre to-day after passing through England. Mme Schreiber, with her white hair and young face, is a *grande dame* of the Radical Party. She used to sit on the platform at all the Congresses, usually between Daladier and Jammy-Schmidt. It seems centuries ago. Colonel Thomas says he can't and won't give any figures of the number of men evacuated from Dunkirk.

Meet Max Beer, the ex-Geneva correspondent of the *D.A.Z.* of Berlin, outside the "Deux Magots." He indulges in the usual German *Galgenhumor*. "Italy's faithfulness to the Iron Pact is the greatest piece of disloyalty to her own traditions," he says. "By failing to cheat, the Italians are just not playing the game." Dine at Rougeot's. Dear old Rougeot's, which used to be one of the favourite haunts of our Columbia University gang back in '27! It's still the same, though the fat red-haired *patron*, I am sorry to hear, died last year. The place is now run by his son-in-law. The old waiter—who was already there in '27—tells me he has just seen somebody who has arrived from Soissons. This man told him that the British and French troops were magnificent, *gonflés à bloc*. I have noticed these last few days that the ordinary people of France are much more confident in their army than are the people at the top.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

On to the Café de Flore. There's a glorious pale-green and orange sky over St.-Germain-des-Prés. All is calm and lovely; the streets are rather dark, and very empty-looking. Lots of people must be beating it. At the Flore I meet Kolya and a very dumb-looking vet in military uniform, also Coutard, a wealthy French barrister I have known for years, now in ordinary soldier's uniform. He is attached to some "administration." He sounds pessimistic, and wonders whether British and French leadership has any *dynamisme* left. Dislikes the coming double pincer movement round Paris very much. I say casually *au revoir* to Coutard. Here he has been in Paris for thirteen years: I have run into him from time to time—and now? I join Duchacek and his three women at the other end of the café. He says he's worried. If the Huns get him they'll shoot him—as an insurgent. "You're lucky," says he. "As an Englishman the worst that can happen to you is Dachau; but we Czechs will be treated as traitors." He is glad Winston has agreed to send full R.A.F. assistance to the Somme; it may save the situation yet. (But *has* Winston really agreed to it?) However, Duchacek has serious doubts about the future; if everything collapses, he thinks his people might have to try to set up the Czech National Committee at Lisbon—if Salazar will let them. The Italians, he says, are apparently aiming at Egypt. He thinks the real fun will start here on Tuesday or Wednesday. It gives me a beastly *dernier-jour-d'un-condamné* feeling.

The Germans dropped leaflets over Paris the other day, saying: "We'll dance with you on the 14th of



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

July." Are they trying to persuade Parisians not to leave Paris, which they actually hope to capture *long before* 14th July?

*Monday, 3rd June.*

I am very tight, having gone with Gilbert to Carboni's to dinner where we drank two bottles of that poisonous Corsican wine. What a day it's been! That was a devil of an air-raid this afternoon.

I went to the War Office at eleven. Then to the office with Picquart, where I sent the paper some stuff about the three bridgeheads on the Somme which Weygand has still failed to mop up. Just as I was going out for lunch to the Haussmann Brasserie the damned *alerte* started. I ran back to the office so as not to be driven into some public shelter. I went upstairs to write some letters. There was a lot of anti-aircraft firing and other queer explosive noises, but none very distinct. It didn't sound like a "real" air-raid. After a while, I went downstairs to have a look at the sky and found quite a crowd talking and arguing under the gateway. A woman said she had just seen a 'plane in a blue gap between the clouds. I looked, but couldn't see anything. When, finally, an hour and a half after the beginning, the all-clear was sounded, my first reaction was to go and have lunch. However, I soon learned that something serious had happened. A Press photographer working in the building was seen dashing off somewhere with his camera. Mr. Barclay from across the landing arrived, full of wild stories about the Avenue de Versailles.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Mr. Putty also arrived, looking a bit shaken. He had just arrived from Maisons-Laffitte by train. Several bombs had dropped quite near a bridge as his train was about to cross it. The bridge was not hit, but the train had to wait while the attempted demolition of the bridge was in progress.

I jumped into a taxi and drove off to the Pont-Mirabeau. It was strange driving down the Seine, with Paris looking as lovely as ever, with the dome of the Invalides glittering in the hot sun, and the familiar panorama with the dome of the Panthéon and the towers of St.-Sulpice in the distance the same as usual.

A large number of cars were on their way to the affected areas; Parisians are immensely curious about anything important happening to their town. On the Pont-Mirabeau there were large crowds of work-people looking at the firemen struggling with the smoke and flames spouting out of the west wing of the Citroen works. It was difficult to get any information. I tried to pump a workman. "*J'sais pas; je regarde.*" Very informative. There was no feeling of dejection in the crowd only a sense of amazement and a violent feeling of anger. "*Fumiers, on leur rendra ça,*" an old woman was shouting, shaking her fists. The Avenue de Versailles was littered with glass. One of the big blocks of flats near the bridge was badly wrecked—all windows shattered; walls too, rather cracked looking. Outside the Café Mirabeau with its shattered windows, workmen were filling up a large crater. A cop came up and asked: "*Il n'y a pas eu de blessés?*" The woman said no. I talked to her. She

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

looked more fed-up than frightened, and said I should look at the hellish mess the explosion had made of the kitchen. I noticed that the débris of glass were all mixed with bits of brown paper. The paper strips don't seem to do much good when the explosion occurs close-by.

On to the rue Poussin—a pretty sight! A large house bombed to hell—the front of its three top stories gone; the whole thing looking like a badly cut piece of cheddar. A mountain of débris is on the ground in front of the house; bedclothes protruding through ceilings; pictures hanging over empty space, with the wall supporting them gone. Reminds me of dear old Madrid. I ask a woman if she saw it happen; she is annoyed at my question—and says somebody *even* came to photograph it. She says there were some dead and injured who were removed from the wreckage.

Since I was in the neighbourhood, I thought I might as well drop in and see “Aunt” Nadya, who lives just off the Avenue de Versailles. Gosh, the house next to them was badly smashed up—glass and other débris all over the place. Found her and Liza, her daughter, in fairly good spirits, though Liza said that the old thing got rather a scare when the bomb hit the house next door. (Why should old women of 75 be scared, even if a bomb *does* drop fifty yards away from them? This sounds a rather drunken remark.)

Citroen has apparently been badly damaged. Gilbert had gone there; he said the place was pretty well demolished, though few or no casualties; they've got good air-raid shelters. Later I learn that 1,000

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

bombs were dropped on Paris; 45 killed, 150 injured. Some bombs were dropped on schools in the suburbs. They were, however, nearly all 100 or 200 lb. bombs; so the Paris *caves* stood the strain quite well. A lot of civilians would not have been killed if they had gone into the shelters.

On to Duff Cooper's reception at the Meurice. He had just given a B.B.C. broadcast about the air raid. We sit around with him at the Meurice drinking whiskies-and-sodas and champagne cocktails; he says Reynaud told him that only the offices of Citroen were wrecked this afternoon. (Gilbert says that's tripe.)

We talk to Duff Cooper chiefly about the Fifth Column activities in France; he is interested. I ask him if there's any Fifth Column activity in England. He thinks there is; there are still some people who would like to see England run on Nazi lines, with them in command. But, on the whole, the *morale* in England is much healthier than in France. He is clearly worried about the outlook in France.

Charles Peake is there and sounds rather pessimistic. I say: "Well, even if France succumbs, England will carry on the fight." He says: "Yes, this war must be won, even if we fight it alone." The idea cheers me up a lot. Still, I say as I leave: "Well, Charles, I hope we meet in Paris again; not in London."

*Tuesday, 4th June.*

They say Musso is going to declare his entry into the war to-night. It seems grotesque; but taking a long

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

view of it, perhaps the Italians are going to save what bits of civilization are still saveable on the Continent. (Disgusting habit I have now of breaking into cablese.) Only is not Italy going to be turned into a German protectorate too? Buré always likes to recall what Musso told him in '26 about German hegemony: "Do you think I'm crazy not to realize what this would mean to Italy?"

I woke up at 5.30 under the cumulative effect of (a) bombing worry, (b) Corsican wine indigestion, (c) noise on the quai. I tried to fall asleep again, but couldn't. Looked out of the window: Louvre still where it was. Lovely sunny morning. What's in store for to-day and especially for to-morrow?

Ordered breakfast at 7.30; tried to sleep again, but it was no good. Paid the hotel bill, as it may be necessary to move nearer to the centre if things get too hot.

At the War Office conference this morning I see Green and Wareing of the *Daily Telegraph*, Mickey Wilson and others. M. Wilson says the Air Ministry was bombed to blazes, just as Bullitt was there having lunch with Laurent-Eynac, the Air Minister. Well, they shouldn't have built the damned place of glass. At the W.O. I run into a Russian who knows Robert Dell very well, but whose name I just can't remember—he seems to know me so well that it is awkward to ask what his name is. He is one of those lost souls whose element used to be the League of Nations and the "Bavaria." I get a letter from Mme Benoît saying Danny has safely arrived from Dunkirk in England. I am very glad about it—with his sophisti-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

cated Trotskyist ideas he seemed the last person in the world to enjoy a heroic death.

The Germans, it seems, used some kind of liquid air bomb in yesterday's air raid on Paris. It doesn't leave any splinter marks, but the concussion is terrific. A trench made of concrete in which a lot of women and children in a school at Nanterre had taken refuge, was squeezed together with terrific force and all the women and children were crushed to death. What other bloodiness are we going to get in this war? Colonel Thomas to-day said that what the Germans seem to have aimed at was "chiefly" military objectives in Paris and the Paris area, but flying high as they did they were endangering all kinds of things which were anything but military objectives.

The Premier's office in a statement to-day says that the total number of victims of the raid is much higher than appeared at first (when it was announced that there had been 45 killed and about 150 injured). Other bodies have been discovered among the wreckage and a number of injured have died. Everywhere civilian victims were more numerous than soldiers.

In the whole Paris region there were 906 victims, among them 254 dead (195 civilians, 59 soldiers) and 652 injured (545 civilians, 107 soldiers).

One of the peculiarities of the air raid was the extremely brief interval between the moment the alarm was sounded and the moment when the firing of the anti-aircraft guns began. In fact, at Auteuil a woman told me yesterday that the alarm was sounded *after* the first bombs had fallen. In any case what

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

people forgot was that if until a fortnight ago Germany's nearest air bases to Paris were about 250 miles away—that is, in Germany—she must now have established air bases on French soil which are no farther away from Paris than Calais is from London.

A significant detail of the raid is that the successive waves of bombers which flew over the Paris region were accompanied by large numbers of fighter 'planes. About a thousand bombs were dropped. Although there are no official estimates, it may be conjectured that since the average weight of the bombs dropped was 200 lb. the number of bombers was about 100. But how many fighters accompanied them?

It is now stated that at least 25 German 'planes were shot down during that raid. The proportion of fighters and bombers among these is not specified. The proportion of 'planes brought down would certainly have been higher but for the fighter escort and the raid was thus carried out at a comparatively low cost to the enemy. That is a lesson of some importance both to Paris and to England now that the Germans are established so near the English coast.

I hear that "Aunt" Sonya's house out in the suburbs had the top floors blown to hell. I must go and have a look.

At 8 o'clock Gilbert says he's going to Comert's office, who has arranged about a Press trip to Orly to see one of the brought-down German 'planes. We find that it isn't Orly, but Chantilly—45 km. away—much too far to travel to-night.

I wonder if Italy is coming in to-night. If America were a little firmer it would be different. England

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

and America may still save human civilization. Will they? Or am I too pessimistic about the French? Comert thinks there's some ill-feeling about the B.E.F. having got away to England, leaving a lot of the French behind. The French naval losses at Dunkirk are serious.

On to the Café de la Paix where I meet Kolya and Paul Sawicki. Paul is very pleased with the whole situation: he says the Poles are being taken seriously at last. They are treated with much greater respect than before; until the 10th of May many Frenchmen looked down their noses when they saw a Pole. Sawicki thinks the future rests with England, not with France. He believes Paris will fall, but that England will hang on to Brittany; he even claims that a British base is being established at St. Malo. The Poles in Brittany, he says, will be very useful to Britain. He thinks the French are degenerate; but the British are quite different. The R.A.F., he says, have completely demolished Essen with *four-ton*-bombs from the U.S.A. (rather a Polish story, I think).

Paul says that the two great European Powers after the war will be England and Poland. The Poles, he says, will come and colonize France, which needs fresh blood very badly. Funny how I feel much less sceptical about the Poles than about the French. Oh, Daladier, oh, Gamelin! And here is Paul Sawicki's tallest story: a British General in Norway who had been a civilian only a few days before, was captured by the Germans and taken round Berlin in a cage.



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Wednesday, 5th June.*

Woke up at eight; had breakfast, and wrote an article for the paper on the bombing of Paris. I walk through the Tuileries to the Continental. It's terribly hot. The gardens are empty, as if the place just belonged to me. Only two gardeners are still messing about with flowerbeds or something. At the Continental there's the usual mess—the French censor hasn't heard of the Embassy bag arrangement—I have to explain at great length.

On to the office. On the way, in the roasting Place Vendôme (where the sandbags round the base of the Napoleon column have collapsed) I meet Reggie. He thinks the Weygand line will hold. "Are you sure?" "Well, not quite, but I hope it will." He says the British are annoyed with the French Air Force for not being more active. I wonder if we are fair to the French. They made an awful mess of the Meuse; but still—why treat them as if they had already lost the war and we were going to carry on alone?

There was a suggestion of that in Winston's speech yesterday, and even more so in Beaverbrook's to-day—his appeal to the aircraft workers, or something. "We and the Empire have only ourselves to rely on now," or words to that effect. Actually, he is probably right.

Picquart, just back from the War Office, tells me that *the great offensive started at dawn*. Don't know why I feel bad about it. May be because one expected the Germans would have to wait a bit longer—at

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

least for Musso's entry into the war. They are doing nothing of the kind. They must have a hell of a lot of material to be able to go off on a big new offensive just after Dunkirk. They are not giving the French enough time to prepare; nor are they giving England time to bring the B.E.F. over to the Somme. They are striking at the weakest points—at the Ham-Peronne gap, and making the fullest use of the three damned bridgeheads Duroc talked about the other day. Have lunch with my Russians. Paul is there; also Aunt S. Long talks in Russian about nothing in particular. Uncle P. tries to be very cheerful, poor dear. The problem again arises of what they are all to do if and when—. Kolya suggests they go with him to Bordeaux or somewhere. Go with Aunt S. to her place in the suburbs to see her house, the top part of which was wrecked on Monday. A lot of damage was done by the bombs all over the neighbourhood; windows shattered, etc. The lift in Aunt S.'s house is not working; the top of the shaft was blown away. They also have to fetch water from somewhere every morning. See Mme Nikitina; she weeps all the time, her nerves have just gone to pieces. She heard six bombs drop; never thought the noise would be so awful. She beseeches me to go to Canada, America or something—she's half-demented with panic. She thinks the Boches mistook her block of flats for a factory. Poor dear, she used to be such an admirer of Hitler; she thought he'd restore Holy Russia. The meeting upsets me.

Back to the office; where I send a short piece to the paper. I then go to buy several *saucissons secs* at

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Orlov's shop. No bully beef—can't get it, says the Russian assistant.

Impossible to get any news from the Front. With appalling monotony all the wireless stations go on repeating this morning's French communiqué about the offensive having started.

I meet Lyosha at the Brasserie Haussmann. He gets another 200 francs out of me; he now claims to have got a job *en province*. He tells me about his air-raid experiences; also tells me how lonely he is—all his friends gone. Poor old *clochard*. He thinks he'll send his MS. of *Eros and Psyche* to the archives of the Ministry of Commerce: "Not to be published before 1960" or something.

On to the W.O. with Gilbert. Meet Lange and Brossette in uniform outside. "*Comment sont les nouvelles?*" Lange—"BONNES." Oh, how nice to hear it for once! John Elliott of the *Herald Tribune* who had an accident on his way from the Front, arrives on crutches, one foot in plaster. Colonel Thomas explains Weygand's *points d'appui* technique. He claims that Weygand has well organized the line *in depth*. "*Pas de rupture de front, nous avons tenu, malgré l'infiltration des tanks entre les points d'appui, qui ont tous tenu.*" Only it's a pity the Germans were allowed to keep their three bridgeheads; but apparently Weygand didn't bother much; and preferred depth instead, assuming they would get across the river anyway.

There was a tremendous prayer meeting at the Sacré-Cœur to-day. How wonderful if Ste. Genevieve were to work her miracle again!!

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

On to the office where I sent a short cable *via Eastern* (i.e. via Malta!) at three francs a word to the paper. It is said to get there quicker than by Radio France. Then on to dinner with Gilbert and Gaby at the Sts. Pères restaurant. We talked about "physical and moral courage," tried to be philosophical and untropical. Ate lobster and *petit salé*. It's astonishing that the railways should still manage to bring all this food to Paris; I thought they'd have more important things to do. Gilbert talked about the beans he is growing on his terrace at St.-Cloud. We talked about the degrees of intelligence in vegetables, and similarly stimulating subjects.

The *patronne* is losing hope over her son in Belgium; dreadful.

*Thursday, 6th June.*

Go to the War Office where I am glad to hear that things are not going too badly; though it seems that a big attack is about to be launched on the Ailette and also on the lower Somme. Somebody from the *Daily Express* says there are already barricades in the Place de la Concorde. Green (*Daily Telegraph*) says it isn't true; but he says that there was a bit of a panic at his hotel when it was learned last night that barricades or something were being erected in the Bois de Boulogne. The people wondered whether they shouldn't beat it at once.

Old General Duval at Colonel Thomas's conference protests against the lack of information given by the Ministry of the same name; he says that now

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

that there is a new Minister in charge there should also be different methods. Good news (as far as it goes): Daladier has got the sack, De Monzie too, Sarraut ditto. Daladier was incompetent, Monzie pacifist and fishy; and Sarraut just an ass. I remember all the stuff I wrote about *le gorille* at the time of the Rhineland *coup*. To-day marks the end of the Radical-Socialist Republic of France: high time too. Or too late? Reynaud, however, still hangs on to Chautemps—a last Radical remnant, or a kind of mascot? And then there are also all these protégés of Mme de Portes—Baudouin, Prouvost, etc.—what are *they* doing in this *lutte à outrance* Cabinet? Lousy Left, lousy Right; but oh, what's the good? *Le peuple*—the lads dying on the Somme through the imbecility of all these people (“*avares du sang français*”) have still much good in them, though God only knows if they still have the spirit of Verdun. I think of Monsieur Maneyraud, the baker from Evaux, and young Jacques Elloy, and Paul Nizan, and the grocer from the rue Broca—the little fellow who was so much in love with his plump young wife. The two used to giggle so inanely every time I told them the war was coming.

I have lunch *chez* Yar, the Russian place off the Champs Elysées with Kolya, Uncle Peter and Paul Sawicki. I can never remember the substance of Russian conversational lunches. Paul is going back to his camp in Brittany to-morrow—in the meantime, with his raspberry-coloured Polish cap (silly-shaped thing it is) he's chiefly concerned about *l'amour*.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

I remember clearest of all the few minutes old Uncle Peter and I sat on a café terrace in the Avenue de l'Opéra while the others had gone to buy scent or lipstick or something at "wholesale" prices for Paul's girl-friend in Brittany. Poor old Uncle Peter—I've known him all these years; and now he feels that his end is near, and that the end of Paris may be near too—the fate of the two are somehow linked together. He recites a bit of Russian poetry about a dying candle or something, tries to be cheerful, but can't quite manage; poor Luba, he says, is slowly dying. So is he, perhaps.

On to the flat, where I play Liszt's version of Isolde's *Liebestod*. Can't decide whether I like or hate the stuff—big belly-aching German music it is; "*Wagner est ce que l'Allemagne a produit de plus grand et de plus barbare*," says André Gide. Still, if Nazi civilization can in time produce Wagners and Beethovens there might be some justification for it—but it never will because there will be no freedom of spirit—which Wagner, also, enjoyed. Queer—Hitler said there wouldn't be any art for the next fifty years. And after? Does it mean the Nazi world will have died? It's the best confession that he himself does not believe in its eternity.

I see Duroc at the War Office. He tries to be fairly cheerful about the results. A terrific tank battle is in progress—Weygand estimates that the Germans have thrown 2,000 into the fray; but of these several hundred have been destroyed. Duroc admits the Germans are pushing forward on the two flanks—

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

towards Tréport, and towards Soissons. Only, the advance, he claims, has not exceeded 12 kilometres anywhere. The advance in the west along the sea coast looks a lot more to me; will they now try to get down to Paris along the Oise valley?

After a rotten dinner at the Quai Voltaire, I go for a walk through the Tuileries. The lights are lovely on the Seine. It's a still starlit night with a pure blue sky. I sit on a bench in the Tuileries, near the Louvre, which looks dark and mysterious. A sausage balloon dangles about nearby—miserable, lonely, sausage balloon; a fat lot of good it'll do at this stage. As I walk back across the Pont-du-Louvre a lot of guns go off somewhere.

The cheery soul at the hotel tells me her son is passing his *bachot* on Monday—what an atmosphere, she says, for passing exams.; poor boy! She believes the British are chucking France. Having lost the Channel ports, they aren't quite so interested in France any longer, she says. There's some truth in it; and the French people feel it instinctively—even without the insinuations of *Paris Soir*. At the War Office to-day Duroc said that the R.A.F. were "not particularly active" on the "Weygand line"—above all, there were no fighters. The French would like us to throw in all our home defence fighters; but Winston apparently has lost faith in the French and thinks it a poor gamble. The theme that "England may have to fight on alone" which runs through a lot of recent British speeches is a clear sign of this. For my own part, I have rubbed it in in all recent articles that we ought to send all we can to France in the way of

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

bombers and fighters; and yet, I am beginning to wonder. But how tragic for the French, all the same. France, who was always crazy to have allies, is now fighting almost alone on land, apart from a very little help from the R.A.F. and the B.E.F., the greater part of whom are now back in England; whence they may never return.

### RETROSPECT

The popularity, or unpopularity of Great Britain among the French since the beginning of the war had its ups and downs. There had always been, in certain French quarters, a traditional dislike of England. Even in the last war, relations between the French and British had not always been perfect. Nor had they been continuously cordial since 1919. Politically, there had been much tension between the two countries; at the time of the Græco-Turkish war, at the time of the Ruhr, and later, during the "disarmament" drive in England, where France's clamour for security was condemned, especially by the English Left, as an obstacle in the way of the post-war millennium. After 1934 France could roughly be divided into a pro-British half and a pro-Italian half. Though the British alliance was nominally accepted by everybody, a large body of opinion, especially on the Right, disliked England. The wildest anti-British outburst during those years was Henri Béraud's article in *Guingoire* in October, 1935, "England must be reduced to slavery." "I hate England by instinct and by tradition," he wrote; and he accused England



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of wanting, with her sanctions policy, to drag France into war against Italy, a country which he liked, largely because it was Fascist.

In 1938 and 1939 there was a great deal of grumbling against the absence of conscription in England: and while its introduction in April, 1939 was greatly welcomed, there were many people in France, especially on the Right (though also others, like MM. Bonnet, Déat and Belin) who thought it totally inadequate. When the war began this inadequacy of the British "war effort" as regards trained effectives was keenly felt by wide sections of French opinion, and it was really only the "phoniness" of the war and the fact that throughout the winter the total loss of British lives (chiefly at sea) was far greater than the loss of French lives which prevented the anti-British grumbling from taking on any serious proportions. German propaganda, though fairly successful with its "Where are the Tommies?" slogans at first, ceased to make much impression on the French, after a few months of war, and especially after the sinking of the *Graf Spee*, which was, after all, the "first Allied victory"—and one which had been won by the British.

During the first four months of 1940 there was very little grumbling against the British; and at one moment, at least—namely after the naval battle at Narvik, when seven German destroyers were sunk in one day—there was enormous enthusiasm in France for the British Navy. The R.A.F. also had its moments of great popularity with the French people, and "Cobber" Kain, in particular, was something of a popular hero in France. The popularity of Britain

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

suffered a sharp drop with the ordinary French people after Dunkirk—that is, after the repatriation of the greater part of the B.E.F., as a result of which France was left to fight Germany “singlehanded.” As regards the personal relations between the B.E.F. and the French Army, the latter—not unnaturally—felt some envy for the British soldiers, who were paid 2 shillings a day as against the French private’s 1½d. It is true that the French private had free cigarettes and cheap railway fares, and his family lived rent-free; but the attempt made by M. Frossard, the Minister of Information, to explain in a broadcast in April that the Tommy was really no better off than the *poilu* was unconvincing; and, knowing M. Frossard, and his friendship for M. Laval, one wonders whether he meant it to be convincing. It is true that French soldiers in the “battle zone” were paid, from December, 10 francs a day (about 1s. 2d.); but they were only a minority. Further, in some of the towns where numerous British troops were stationed, the local inhabitants complained of the “overbearing” manner of the British troops, and of their “noisiness,” especially at night. In such towns, the presence of the British troops also tended to send up the cost of living.

The Germans exploited this relative unpopularity of the “rich” British soldiers and officers, for instance by dropping “transparent” postcards from their ‘planes. The postcards showed French soldiers attacking barbed-wire defences. On top, above a large blank space was written: “Where are the Tommies?” and when you held the blank space up to the light,

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

you saw a picture of British officers, looking like conquerors, making bold advances to French girls and women. In November they also dropped little red booklets over Paris—looking like English books of stamps. The booklet started with a statement by Mr. Churchill “at the secret War Cabinet on 2nd September” (he wasn’t even in the Cabinet then): “We shall fight to the last Polish and the last French soldier.” Among much other information the booklet said that while the French lost 1,500,000 men in the last war, the British lost only 420,000 (that is, half the real number). At the end of the booklet there were photographs of a gently smiling Führer among crowds of adoring youths.

*Friday, 7th June.*

Édouard Helsey in the *Journal* writes an alarming piece about the fanaticism of the Huns. “*Leur infanterie sautille comme des automates, ils tirent leurs mitraillettes dans tous les sens criant Heil Hitler—ce sont des derviches, des fakirs.*” He tells the story of a *grand blessé*, who, in dying, asked for his pocket-book—they gave him his wife’s picture. “No, not that one,” he said, “I want my Führer.” Helsey also claims that the German troops are drugged.

Blum in the *Populaire* talks of the future frontiers the Germans have in mind: the annexation of Belgium, Holland and the whole north of France up to Le Havre. Italy, he says, would get everything east of the Rhône, the Balkans and the Straits. Don’t know where he got his stuff.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

This is the second day of the "Battle for France." The optimism at the War Office is still lasting out. They talk about Weygand's anti-tank "strong points" which, they claim, are holding out very well. The number of German tanks destroyed is said to run into several hundred since yesterday morning. Only they've got such a devil of a lot more.

I spent the greater part of the day in the office; it was dreadfully hot; God, how terrible it must be at the Front! At the War Office to-night the optimism was almost aggressive. It seems that they never expected the Weygand Line to hold out as well as it has done these last forty-eight hours. I feel there's going to be a terrible change to-morrow. The Germans are throwing more and more troops into the battle, while the French troops don't seem to be relieved sufficiently; and Colonel Thomas made a dreadful confession to-night when he said that "we succeeded in bringing up supplies to many of our front line troops." In other words, the communications behind the lines are being demolished so badly that the French are unable to supply the *other* troops. Mickey Wilson says he has just seen somebody who has returned from Beauvais: the number of French wounded is appalling; and at Beauvais the Germans completely demolished a large hospital, killing the nuns and most of the wounded. I wrote a long piece for the paper, particularly drawing attention to the appointment of General de Gaulle.

"De Gaulle's appointment as Premier's assistant War Office highly significant stop like Reynaud he foresaw nature German attack and advocated in little book published 1935

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

creation powerful French armoured units but was treated as crank and paradoxical mind by Daladier and never rose above Colonel's rank stop"

Only what can de Gaulle do at this stage? He can't provide 3,000 tanks overnight, can he?

Gunfire can be clearly heard at night; it can't be very far away.

*Saturday, 8th June.*

Just as I expected, the optimism at the War Office has given way to an entirely different mood. "Let us be neither optimistic nor pessimistic," Colonel Thomas said this morning. He said that the French soldiers were all fighting magnificently; but admitted (1) an important retreat of the French left flank to the River Bresle "so as to shorten the front," and (2) that a devil of a lot of German tanks "though not followed by infantry" have broken through the French lines, and are running straight into Normandy.

"View expressed officially," I wired to the paper this afternoon, "is that these units may soon find themselves in extremely precarious position high command having taken every possible precaution deal with these raiders stop at moment no further news of this startling incursion available except they've reached Forges les Eaux on Paris Dieppe road and seem pushing Rouen-wards stop may be assumed bombers will attempt deal with these raiders stop."

I am not sure about the "extremely precarious position" of these tanks; it's only the "officially expressed" view. General Duval in the *Journal* writes a fatuous piece saying that tanks may easily

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

get very far inland; but people who see them shouldn't get flustered, and jump to hasty conclusions.

I work in the office in the afternoon writing a final article for the *New Statesman*; I don't think there'll be a chance to write another one from Paris. It's lyrical, and rather sloppy. I still can't decide whether the Italian separate peace proposal to France will be made with or without a declaration of war.

I decide not to bother about the censorship; why worry about such things these days?—and just to post it air mail. Maybe it'll get there.

In the afternoon I drop in at the Ixe-Opéra tea-room. There are still plenty of cakes; but very few customers. I grumble about the price of the *café glacé*, which is seven francs. Later Bob Cooper arrives in his war correspondent's uniform. He's just come back from the Front. We go for a drink to Pam-Pam's which is still fairly full. He is worried and says it's just "bloody awful." The French are cracking up. The morale is all going to blazes.

I hear there is terrific dissatisfaction among the Paris working class. They have been given the strictest orders to stay where they are; if they leave Paris they'll be treated as deserters. Naturally, they don't like to see the other people buzz off like this. By the way, after the air raid on Citroen on Monday the French wireless gave the whole show away by saying that "Citroen workers must turn up for the night shift as usual." It rather indicated that something *unusual* had happened at Citroen's. I wish I could, as in the past, go and talk to the Citroen or Renault workers in some *bistrot* to see what they really feel.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

But what's the use? With all these arrests of Communists (and most of the men are Communists) they wouldn't talk freely in a café even to their best friend.

*Sunday, 9th June.*

With one damned thing after another, I haven't much time to write this diary. This morning Colonel Thomas said something about this being a "crucial day." The battle is taking on frightful proportions; and it seems clear that the Germans are getting away with it. They are getting near the Marne; and in the west they are pushing towards Pontoise. One can hear the gunfire quite distinctly now; especially at night. This is how I concluded my cable to the paper to-day:

Paris in its anguish strangely calm and beautiful these days  
stop during day numerous luggage laden cars seen leaving  
town with passengers having tears in eyes stop at night  
streets almost deserted excepting rifled guards outside  
Government buildings and underground stations stop cafés  
restaurants close ten-thirty stop food plentiful stop one even  
wonders how railways lorries have time with battle raging so  
near bring food to Paris stop at night distant gunfire hearable  
also occasional bombs dropping closer by and in night air  
there's faint sweet scent of resin and burning trees stop it  
may be woods burning somewhere near front stop govern-  
ments decisions case Paris immediately threatened being  
awaited stop but tis still too early dwell on the darker possi-  
bilities of coming week.

It was strange and puzzling, that persistent smell of burning trees all last night. For a moment I even

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

wondered if it wasn't some treacherously pleasant-smelling new gas, which in a few hours would burn the guts out of you. Isn't there some filthy gas which smells of geranium or freshly mown hay? If so, why not trees?

Colonel Thomas has transferred his Press conferences to the Quai d'Orsay, because General de Gaulle, the new Under-Secretary for War, is needing for himself the big room with the medieval armour. To-night the atmosphere was more deadly and hopeless than I had ever known it. Colonel Thomas almost admitted that he regarded Paris as lost. The armoured units which were supposed to be in such a "precarious position" yesterday, seem to have been reinforced by hundreds of more tanks and to have reached Rouen. Other tanks have reached L'Isle Adam—about fifteen miles north of Paris—pretty? The French journalists are in a state of gloom. Most of them are going off to Tours to-morrow. They are publishing their papers for the last time in Paris to-morrow morning. Asked whether the Government has decided to leave Paris, Colonel Thomas says: "*Je n'en sais rien.*" But everybody asserts they are going to-morrow. The conference is held in the Clock Room of the Quai d'Orsay. I saw Briand here one day, when he was on his last legs—during the League Council meeting over Manchuria. Barthou lay in state here after his assassination at Marseilles; the old boy, who wanted to "encircle" Germany in 1934 much to the indignation of our Liberals, knew what was coming. It was in this room also that the Kellogg Pact was signed. The



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

delegates sat round the very table where we are now told of the imminent fall of Paris.

I saw Uncle Peter and Luba this afternoon. I hope to God I have a chance to see them again. Prouvost, the new Minister of Information, received the British Press this afternoon. I couldn't be bothered going. Apparently he talked a lot of platitudes about "Franco-British co-operation." God knows why Reynaud ever took the owner of *Paris-Soir* into his Cabinet. The whole attitude of his paper in the last fortnight has been very ambiguous; for instance that big splash on the front page about the French in England being subjected to the same restrictions and indignities as all other aliens. He—and Baudouin—are said to be protégés of la Comtesse de Portes, Reynaud's friend, who insisted on their inclusion in the Cabinet. She already got Palewski sacked, and is a very bad influence with the little man.

I must pack my suit-case now to take it to the office in the morning. The river outside, with the dark outline of the Louvre, is so lovely. There is again in the air this faint sweet smell of burning pine trees.

**PART II**  
**EXODUS**



## EXODUS

*Thursday, 13th June.*

The last three days have been crowded with such a mass of experiences and emotions that I haven't had time to settle down to write, nor the ability to see the wood for the trees. I have left Paris—perhaps for ever. This is the *débâcle* of France. I hope to God England can continue the fight. France is already *à bout de souffle*. I am at Tours, the “provisional capital” of France. I sit in a little open air café outside the “Ministry of Information” in the ramshackle old building of the former post office, in a small untidy, provincial side street of Tours. There's a 1918 war memorial—a naked lady with a helmet—in the middle of the square, and next to it, a *pissoir*. The square is crowded with cars with Paris number plates. The sky is dull and grey. Next to me are two Frenchmen of the *café de commerce* type. One of them has just mentioned Gambetta—though it was perhaps only the rue Gambetta. But—Gambetta and Tours? Only does the situation present itself in the same way now? Are the French still capable of a *lutte à outrance*? I am not blaming the French soldiers, poor devils. There's been some appalling mismanagement of France's whole military policy for years; now the wretched *poilus* have to pay the price for it—for all the luxury of the easy-going Radical-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Socialist Republic; though heaven knows, their spirit does not in most cases seem to be what it was in '14; or at Verdun. Then also the Germans had superiority in numbers and equipment; and yet——. There was a patriotic self-sacrificing spirit then which is often lacking to-day. The men think too much of their families, and the women weep too much. War to them is too much of a personal calamity. And their spirit has been weakened by propaganda. Propaganda doesn't work in peaceful surroundings; but it begins to work once you are scared and in grave danger. And then there was, of course, Russia in 1914, and that made a big difference—both materially and morally. But for the Russian advance into East Prussia Paris might well have fallen in 1914.

But never mind about that; I've written it before. What I want to write about is my last day in Paris, and the Exodus. Why worry about my own problems?—they are so small compared with the universal tragedy of Europe. Yet it was not without bitter grief that I left Paris. I left there a bunch of helpless old people; and then there are all those French friends—many in the army—whom I may never see again. . . . I don't care much about worldly possessions; but I give a sad thought now and then to my books. They are part of that work of thirteen years of journalism which may now be at an end. When I think of Paris, of all these years in Paris, and of all that Paris has represented to European civilization, I have an agonizing pang in my heart. I know Paris still exists, and yet—it is hard to imagine that it is still there.

## EXODUS

And so, here I am at Tours—La Touraine, garden of France, land of Rabelais, land of Descartes and all that. And alas! land of Chautemps.

That last day in Paris. . . . We had for some days been considering the possibility of the fall of Paris within a very short time. On Saturday there was a wave of optimism at the War Office. On Sunday everything changed. The Boches had crossed the Aisne, were pushing south of Soissons; motorized columns were advancing on Rouen. On Sunday the situation became critical.

There's a Press conference at Prouvost's—the new Minister of Information. I can't be bothered going to it. Gilbert later tells me he talked some platitudes about Anglo-French co-operation. I go instead to see old Peter and Luba. She produces coffee and cherries. I stay half an hour, talk chiefly about my own troubles, though I know that if I have to leave Paris, *their* troubles will be a lot worse than mine. But I leave in the expectation of seeing them again. Poor "Uncle" Peter! If only he and his poor little wife had died before this agony. I still feel the hard bristle of his whiskers as I kissed him good-bye. I left them 5,000 francs—a fat lot of good that'll do them. She asks me if I can't give her another 1,000; I say no. I walk into the street—the old street I have known for so many years. I meet Jeanne Lefèvre and Manon at the corner of the Avenue. Jeanne is carrying about a little valise with Anatole France's letters, and with a written and a printed copy of the speech he made at her wedding; she was told these manuscripts were worth a lot of money. She is carrying

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

them about—just in case. They are her only valuable possessions. Even so, she thinks me panicky and says the Germans “certainly won’t come to Paris.” The café with a lot of people sitting about on that golden Sunday afternoon, looks strangely normal. I drive back to the office in a taxi. Have dinner with Gilbert at the rue des Sts.-Pères restaurant. Forget what we ate. I decide to move to the flat below the office early next morning; it’s no use staying on at the hotel, where the ’phone has been cut off.

I am very worried, and can’t sleep. I get up, and sit at the window, breathing the fresh air from the Seine. There is a starlit sky over the Louvre. I look out to see the dome of the Institut shrouded in darkness. The suit-case is packed. I get up early; and after the *petit déjeuner* I go in search of a taxi. I had stood at the window for some time before that; there was a tremendous rush of cars along the *quai*—and not a single free taxi among them. All the taxis and cars are loaded with luggage and mattresses. I go out and stand on the *quai* for a long time, waving stupidly at the passing traffic. Annette, the little maid with glasses, goes off to the Gare d’Orsay to see what she can find. I go and stand at the rue de Beaune corner. All in vain. In the end I decide to cross the river; and at last I find a taxi on the Pont du Louvre, and come back in it to the hotel. The *patronne* weeps bitterly as I say good-bye. The daughter, with a little baby with violet eyes in her arms, also cries. Oh, not for my sake; but because of the circumstances that make me leave Paris. She is still without news of her husband. What other

## EXODUS

unhappiness is still in store for these poor women—these noble, sensitive, unhappy women of France?

The bright summer sun shines on the quais, which glitter dazzlingly. I go to the office with a Polish officer from the hotel who retains the taxi in order to go on in it. I wait for a long time for Gilbert. Downstairs, in the flat, I play some Chopin preludes—absurd?

Picquart has just come from the Press conference at which Colonel Thomas failed to turn up; no explanation was given. Picquart strongly suspects that the Colonel has buzzed off to Tours. Everybody, everybody is buzzing off. The office manager, I found, had buzzed off at six in the morning, telling his assistant to settle everything—money, wages, etc. He said he would send a car for him at ten. Of course he didn't send any car. I found the wretched assistant frantic with worry about what to do.

Kolya arrives. He is full of projects. He wants to go south but hasn't got a *sauf conduit*. He doesn't see why he shouldn't be all right under the Huns; only he rather hates the thought of it. He talks of going to Périgueux, but he hasn't any money except 1,000 francs. I give him 500 francs more and my portable typewriter which he thinks he may sell; though I really need it myself—but I haven't anything else to give him. He is brave in the face of this appallingly uncertain future. I tell him I probably shan't leave till to-morrow. I write a few short notes to the various "Aunts"—poor old things. Aunt Nadya rings up, asks if I can't go and see her; I say it's impossible. So it is. She is out at Auteuil and the car isn't available.



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

I wish I could go and see old Peter again; but I think I may still manage it to-night, if we stay till to-morrow. In fact, I don't know whether I mayn't stay on several more days. And yet I feel there isn't long left.

I send a short cable to the paper saying roughly that I know nothing about the war, but that Paris is "awaymelting." Gilbert arrives at last, and says he may give me "another twenty-four hours' grace." We go to Pierre's for lunch in the Place Gaillon. It's a hot day; we sit outside. I tell Gilbert it's an expensive place. "Oh," he says, "it may be your last lunch in Paris." It is terribly hot. We eat *œufs à la gelée*, cold meat and salad and have some Alsace wine and Perrier.

After an *émouvant* visit from "Aunt" Sonya, who insists on my taking an ikon which, she says, has miraculous virtues (her father-in-law was preserved by it from a bullet in the Russo-Turkish war of '77—bullets can't have been very potent in those days!), we decide she'll come again in the morning. She cries, and we say good-bye. What happened after that? I don't remember that crazy day very clearly. Oh, yes, at four Gilbert announced that the censors in the rue Édouard VII had departed. He went off to see Comert to argue—obviously to no purpose. Kerillis in the *Epoque* in the morning said he wasn't as lucky as most papers—he didn't know if he could carry on *en province*. All the other papers have cleared out of Paris—though the *Paris-Soir* is still appearing to-day—for the last time. "We are paying a terrible price for past errors," Kerillis writes, "*mais la France ne peut pas mourir.*"

It is terribly hot. I don't know if we are going

## EXODUS

to leave to-night or not. Probably not. The censorship has gone; there is nothing to do but to wait. I dump a few possessions in to the suit-case—among them three books: *Candide* and Gogol's *Dead Souls*, and Gide's *Journal*; and I put Péguy's *La France* in my pocket. I wrap up the Matisse; but there is no room in the case for the Derain; it'll just have to stay. Pity. At the Office I look at my desk; there are papers and letters in the drawers; nothing compromising; so I don't even bother destroying them. I look out of the window, and have a terrible longing to go for another walk through the familiar Paris streets. I wish I could go to the Left bank; but it's too far. I go out and walk down the Boulevard des Italiens, a little beyond the Carrefour Drouot. Pillot's shop is still packed with shoes; there are crowds of people in the street; even a cinema is still open. Strange. Cars, though not as many as in the morning, are rushing past. It is hot and sunny—a perfect summer day in Paris. At the rue Laffitte I stop and look for a long time at the Sacré Cœur in the distance—white and pure against the blue summer sky. I walk back along the Boulevard Haussmann, and sit down outside the *brasserie*. The fat waiter thinks the Boche will be in Paris within forty-eight hours; the *patron* has left Paris, and has left him in charge. "I know how to deal with these *salauds*," he says. "I was in Germany as a war prisoner. *On les aura quand-même*," he adds a trifle doubtfully. I see Kolya pass and call out. He is greatly excited—he has just got 1,000 francs from his employer as a special concession, though the man owes him 8,000.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

He thinks he will now be able to go to the south of France. Verneti, the bank manager, arrives; he says the bank is being evacuated to Cognac, but *les caisses* will remain open until——.

Back to the office where Gilbert definitely decides to go off to-night. The Germans, he says, are already at Pontoise. We ring up Gaby and Marion to tell them to come to the office at once. Gilbert sends the car for them. They arrive soon after.

A moving good-bye to Kolya; poor devil. I ring up old Mrs. MacDonald; she says they were promised a lift in a car; but the people have left without them. They'll have to stay on in Paris. With communications with England cut off, God knows what they'll live on. At seven we learn that Italy has declared war; we take it as a small detail in the general disaster, except that Marion grows indignant and calls them swine.

Oh, that departure from Paris. To begin with, the car, which Gilbert had sent on some errand to Le Vésinet at 6.30 failed to return. Gilbert stood agitatedly looking out of the office window at all the cars driving into the street. There were many Citroens, but not ours. Le Vésinet was only fifteen miles away; the car had gone at 6.30 and now it was 8 o'clock, 8.15, 8.30. Had Cosandier been stopped from coming back into Paris? Before leaving he had wondered if something like that mightn't happen to him. At last he arrived. He looked perturbed. The car had got stuck, he said, in a mass of troops—ragged, tired, demoralized-looking, many of them drunk, all of them without rifles, drifting into Paris. A routed army.

## EXODUS

Dusk was falling over Paris when we went downstairs to the car with our cases. The concierge, bewildered, distressed-looking, asked if we were *really* going away. What should *she* do, she asked. Her husband was at Poitiers, her child in the Pyrénées. I felt *géné*, guilty, I gave her another 100 francs for no particular reason—it felt such a silly inadequate gesture. I felt a kind of lump in my throat, and wanted to kiss her good-bye, but Gilbert would have thought it ridiculous. It is true I *had* advised her to go south to join her child; and yet—what silly gratuitous advice. It would have been easy for her if she had had a car; and then she said she couldn't leave her *loge*, without giving notice; and her husband's clothes were there, what would she do about *them*? We drove off, Gilbert, Gaby, and Marion in the back seat, Cosandier and I in front. It was getting dark and the streets looked deserted. We drove along the Boulevard Haussmann, past the Printemps and St.-Augustin and up the Boulevard Malesherbes to a modern block of flats near the Porte Champerret, where Gaby had to collect some things. On the way we passed a crowd of ragged soldiers, many of them drunk, and shouting "*à bas la guerre!*" And then we drove through streets and avenues I did not know, and through the Bois de Boulogne, deserted at that hour, to Auteuil, where in some avenue—it wasn't the Avenue de Versailles but somewhere near it—or was this Boulogne or Billancourt?—yes, I think it was—we tried to refuel. There were queues of cars at the petrol pumps—that is at those which were still open, for most had closed down. At one of the pumps the man

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

refused to serve us because his arm was too sore after all these days of ceaseless work.

There was a red sunset, and an unusual black haze over Paris. And then we drove on through Boulogne, across St.-Cloud bridge and up the hill to the block of modern flats where Gilbert lives. As we passed through the Avenue de Versailles, I gave old Aunt Nadya a moment's thought—poor old thing. She was living just round here. See her again?—what was the good? At St.-Cloud we were going to join the two other cars, both belonging to a Mrs. A., a friend of Gilbert's. With her were travelling her son and daughter. She was going to drive one of the cars, Cosandier the other, and Gilbert was going to drive ours. When would the caravan be ready to leave? Gilbert 'phoned Mrs. A. and it was agreed we'd leave about midnight. We helped Gilbert to pack his cases, and to wrap up some of his little Chinese jade things of which he is very proud. He has lots of them; but had to leave most of them, and especially all the bigger things behind. When the cases were packed, I said: "Now, let's go and have just another look at our Paris." There is a magnificent view of Paris from Gilbert's St.-Cloud terrace up on the hill. Normally you see the Bois de Vincennes, and the Panthéon, and St. Sulpice and the Invalides and the Eiffel Tower, and, in the foreground, the Bois de Boulogne. But this was the uncanniest moment in all my experience. As we went out on to the terrace and looked down on our Paris for the last time, we saw—nothing. A black fog had hidden it from our view. The smoke screen the Germans had used for crossing

## EXODUS

the Seine further west had apparently drifted over Paris.

We were all hungry and tired; and proceeded to make supper. There was a strange feeling in that house. I could have stolen anything, and nobody would have cared, least of all the owner. I *did* steal a piece of *port-salut* and wrapped it in a napkin, one of a set. Who cared?

It was pitch black at St.-Cloud. One of Mrs. A.'s cars had a faulty tyre, and had to be taken to the garage; which took a lot of time. At last, after midnight, all three cars were downstairs; Mrs. A.'s cars crammed with stuff. Somewhere very near, the guns were going hard. "Big stuff," Gilbert remarked. A panicky man's voice in the neighbouring house shouted about our headlights—"éteignez les phares, nom de Dieu, mais éteignez donc les phares."

At last we drove off. It was 12.40 a.m. on Tuesday, 11th June—Marion's birthday. We drank a gulp of red wine to celebrate. We drove along a wooded road on to Versailles passing long rows of French Army lorries on the way. At Versailles the traffic jam was terrific. Near the statue of Louis XIV outside the Château, we were held up by the military police. Army lorries pass in endless number—we have to wait. Darkness, a few lights, shouts of the military police, the rumbling of thousands of engines; we move on at top gear in jolts of one or two yards at a time. I have to look back all the time to see if the second car is following us. With its cycles and mattresses it looks strangely tank-like in the darkness—the cycle wheels sticking out like guns. Evacuation

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

is like a funeral. All the bother of the practical arrangements blunts you during a large part of the time to the tragedy, to the loss of something you loved. It's worse than any bother with undertakers. We crawled on slowly, with constant jolts, to St.-Cyr. Near the railway bridge there was a bomb crater in the road which had just been repaired.

In the midst of all this muddle we lose the last car; we discover its disappearance while we are in a stretch of flat country, on a road, with a railway viaduct alongside on the left. "Hardly a very good spot," says Gilbert, looking at the viaduct. It's a still, misty night. The frogs are croaking their heads off in the marsh to the right of the road. We have to wait till dawn. Cosandier wants gulps of red wine, which I give him from an open bottle of Pommard I took from Gilbert's kitchen. Why leave it to the Boche? At last dawn comes. The cars driving past become more numerous, also a lot of lorries evacuating firms from Paris. Cosandier and Gilbert go a few miles back to look for Mme A.; no sign of her. Then the car in which they went has a puncture. I am mildly amused—fatalistic. It's all so absurd. Sitting beside a marsh with croaking frogs at 5 a.m. some twenty miles outside Paris when we had hoped to get to Tours at 8 a.m. seems as absurd as the whole situation. We missed the relatively open roads at night time. Lots of cars begin to pass; also many people on cycles with wretched little bundles tied to the handlebars. An empty train rattles along the viaduct towards Paris. At last we get a move-on. But at Rambouillet there is another appalling jam

## EXODUS

We take over an hour to get through the town. The local people at the windows look out with a kind of bewildered air at the endless procession of luggage-laden cars. The bakeries and *bistrots* are opening up. It's about 6 o'clock. The run from Rambouillet to Chartres is a little easier—I take the Péguy out of my pocket. Here it is:

Cette immense Beauce, grande comme la mer, triste autant et aussi profonde comme la mer; cet océan de blés . . . une beauté parfaitement horizontale, sans un défaut, sans une vilénie, sans un manque, sans une petitesse: le pays des véritables couchers du soleil.

It was like that, on that morning when we drove from Rambouillet to Chartres. The roads were, here and there, blocked by gates built of rough stone; as if the tanks couldn't go straight across the *océan de blé*! (which indeed they did a few days later). And in the wood through which we drove, there were soldiers along the road—watching out for parachutists. Had there been any? They didn't know. "*On dit . . .*" Most of them looked morose and worried—only one of them looked martial with the rifle pointed towards the wood, as though ready to charge. "*Ca a commencé hier à onze heures du matin,*" one of them said about the procession of refugee cars. We passed through wide fields of green wheat. No doubt for the Boche to eat when it's ripe.

At length we reached Chartres. From the road we entered we couldn't see the cathedral: the square where we stopped looked like any square in any second-rate provincial town. The centre of the square was crowded with cars. There was an un-



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

healthy bustle in the streets, and a kind of irritably despairing atmosphere in the café. People were coming and going, cursing the waiters and the waiters snapping back. The old red-faced woman behind the counter looked in a hostile kind of way at all new arrivals. She didn't care to see them served. We waited ages for coffee; and then for the *croissants*—good and warm—which had to be fetched from the bakery. We washed at a tap in the yard, and the *patronne* made a row because Mrs. A.'s young son was going to use a table napkin for his hands. "*Quel toupet,*" she screamed. In the midst of all this anger, anxiety, irritation, Marion and I walked out and looked from afar at the cathedral of Chartres, so calm, so serene, so eternal—perhaps. The Boches at Chartres—it somehow seemed even more intolerable than in Paris. We wanted to go up to the cathedral, but there was no time. Only, as we were driving out, we got a full view of it again in all its slightly lopsided beauty. It brought a lump to my throat.

We had tried to get a paper at Chartres, but in vain; there was none to be got. This general ignorance partly accounted for the nervousness; and gave birth to endless rumours—as will be seen from the next bit. The road from Chartres to Tours was much easier. At times Gilbert reached 100 and even 110 km. per hour along that long straight road from Chartres to Châteaudun. I wish I could describe Châteaudun, Vendôme and the rest of the towns we passed in this "garden of France" on that lovely summer morning; but I remember them only faintly. What I do remember is the expression on the faces—

## EXODUS

morose, dejected. Even the children seemed dejected. The soldiers were the worst of all; and it was a pleasant relief to pass a party of British soldiers washing and shaving and having their morning tea out of tin goblets. They looked pink and healthy, and waved cheerfully, and scarcely seemed to realize what was going on. And then we stopped at a village with rose creepers on the walls of the houses; and Cosandier, who was in the front car, came dashing to ours, waving frantically and shouting: "Congratulations! Russia and Turkey have declared war on Germany." He had been told so by a crowd of people chatting in the street. Somebody had heard it on the wireless. (Comert later remarked that the Fifth Column was deliberately spreading optimist rumours so as to create subsequent disappointment and discouragement.) We couldn't believe it, and yet we were desperately anxious to believe it, and Gilbert and I clearly went on day-dreaming, imagining all sorts of combinations. "Even if true it wouldn't save Paris," I said. "No, but it could save the spirit of France," said Gilbert. We watched people's faces—was there any change? No—not really—and yet we imagined there was a *little* change. Only, as we passed a crowd of French soldiers one of them shouted: "*Les Boches sont-ils à Paris?*" How readily they were assuming their defeat! We also stopped—I think it was at Châteaudun—to get some gadget repaired in the first car. We still wanted confirmation about Russia. An old woman said she hadn't heard of that, but she had heard that America had declared war on Italy. "*Mais on ne sait rien au juste. Ah, c'est bien triste, Monsieur.*"

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

When I remarked that there were lots of British troops about, she said bitterly, "*Oh, non, pas assez, pas assez.*" There seemed quite a bit of anti-British feeling in the provinces. In the market place they were still selling cotton goods and other odds and ends.

Before reaching Tours we passed an aerodrome—it had been badly bombed. We crossed the Loire bridge. The streets at Tours were infernally crowded, with cars, buses, lorries and little blue tram-cars. We crawled along the main street—the rue Nationale—and got in the end to the Hotel Metropole. Mme A. and her daughter had arrived a few hours earlier by a different road. None of us had slept for a second in the last 36 hours, and we were all very tired. Taking the line of least resistance we went to a grocer's shop marked *produits coloniaux*, in a side street near the hotel and bought lots of tinned food which we took to the corner café. Gilbert grimly remarked: "Well, I never thought I'd be a refugee." There was no sleeping accommodation anywhere, except that Mme A. had got a room for herself at the Metropole. Part of this hotel, as many other hotels, had been commandeered. Later I had a talk with the proprietor of the Metropole, a nice old Frenchman, tall, with a drooping white moustache, and looking like Senator Henri Roy, who admitted that he was ignoring the requisition order as hard as he could—the requisitioned rooms were not paid for in cash, and he didn't know when, if ever, he'd get the official IOUs cashed; so he preferred regular customers. As a result we all got rooms in the end—only not on the first night.

After our lunch at the café, Gilbert and I went in

## EXODUS

search of the Ministry of Information. What a mess! Nobody knew anything. In a small side street called the rue Gambetta there is a derelict old building, the white stucco walls gone all grey and black with old age. It's the former post office and has still *Postes—Télégraphes—Téléphones* written on the front. Opposite is another decrepit dirty building of the Bourse de Travail. In these two the censorship, the Ministry of Information, the Press rooms, etc. were concentrated. As we arrived, we met André Glarner who informed us that he was arranging a Press work-room on the top floor of the post office building—with school desks for typewriters, etc. We went up the winding stair inside a turret to what looked like a large attic. The place was filthy with paper débris and sawdust. A few packets of typewriting paper and Government circulars were lying about. There was nowhere to sit. A few workmen were scrubbing the floor and the dirty old walls. On the floor below Press Wireless was being set up; the only means of communicating with England was to wire via New York at 8d a word! Next to it were the French censors, among them my friend the captain from the rue Édouard VII, who had said two days before that France would go on fighting even if the capital had to be shifted in stages to Tizi-Ouzou. Sleepy as I was, I wrote a short message to the paper but the censor had been given a new *consigne*—all messages "dealing with the war" must go first to the French and British military censors. These I found downstairs. There was a long argument on whether Tours should be called Tours or "somewhere in France." They

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

insisted on the latter. All right—it didn't matter to me; but how ridiculous: the German wireless had already for the last two days been making fun of Tours, "the provisional, the very provisional capital of France."

We hung aimlessly about the street for a while. In the little open-air café in the square with the war memorial and the *pissoir* we ran into Knickerbocker, and Edgar Mowrer, and Eve Curie, and Handler and Heinzen of the U.P. We looked for Comert, at the post office building and at the Bourse de Travail. Nobody knew where he was. There was a dreadful *pagaie* everywhere. However, we thought, let's give them a chance. We went back to the hotel in the car through a howling mob of traffic. Fripton of the Ministry of Information was very cordial and obliging—arranged with the hotel proprietor that the chauffeur and I should sleep in the lounge downstairs; while Marion and Gaby got a room to themselves, and Gilbert got a bed in Bob Stockfish's room (Bob's a director of some English firm in Paris). Fripton also let me use his private bathroom, after which I felt much better. We arrange to join him Chez Buré, a famous *tourangeau* restaurant, with one of those wooden *auberge* fronts. It rained like hell; and there was a *bagarre* in the street, a *garde mobile* bullying a soldier about something or other; I don't know what happened, but there was a large excited crowd watching the row and the yelling went on for a long time. We sat at a long table in the *auberge* Buré—good soup and some kind of *bœuf à la mode*, and strawberries, and something else; and

## EXODUS

a lot of Chinon wine. Fripton, who sat opposite me, was uproariously jovial, parodying my *New Statesman* articles from Paris and calling his predecessors at the Ministry of Information a lot of names. He thought the French were sunk, but that England would carry on. His exuberant joviality was thoroughly distasteful to me; I could not help thinking of Paris; Paris and Chartres cathedral. Stockfish, the fat business man was in the meantime behaving like somebody out of Fielding—slapping the waitress's behind and insisting on kissing her. And then, all of a sudden, and without any sirens blowing, the lights were put out, and we continued our meal by candlelight—with a solitary candle for the lot of us. Guns were firing. "*C'est la D.C.A.*" somebody said.

I went out into the street. The torrential rain in the square, crowded with cars, was continuing. Nothing could be heard but the booming of guns. After a while, the party departed in their respective cars—the fat bloke yelling *merde* at the police who were ordering him not to put on the headlights. Gilbert, who was with the Fripton crew, later said their joviality soon vanished when they realized that it was a real air-raid. Cosandier, completely exhausted, and I went to sleep on the lounge sofas. The women went upstairs. The firing of guns had ceased by this time. Somebody said that the Boche 'planes had been looking for the bridge over the Loire but couldn't find it on that rainy night. Were they still bothering to destroy French communications; did they still think the French were going to put up a good fight?

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*Wednesday, 12th June.*

I slept soundly; and had a good breakfast. Then out into the street. I was late for Colonel Thomas's conference on the second floor of the Bourse de Travail, but was told by that Egyptian working on the *Chicago Daily News* what he had said. The Boche were somewhere around Senlis; they had crossed the Seine and also the Marne. The fighting in Champagne was very heavy; they were trying to cut off the Maginot troops from the rest. In other words, to push down into Alsace. Gilbert thought he might run up to Paris in the car. I thought it was crazy; but as a matter of prestige, thought I might go with him. I didn't send the paper anything that morning. Went back to the hotel instead and walked with Marion down the rue Nationale and across the Loire Bridge. We sat on the bridge and recalled the passage about the silver Loire in *St. Joan*. We also remarked that the Loire wasn't an obstacle of any sort—as shallow as a ditch, with islands and sandbanks in the middle. Looked from the distance at the two ornate towers of Tours cathedral and thought it wasn't worth the long walk. We walked back along the rue Nationale. The shops were crammed with food of every variety, fancy goods, etc., and the procession of refugee cars was getting thicker and thicker. The cafés were crowded with familiar faces—journalists, politicians etc. They all looked pleased to be here—out of Paris. They were almost jovial. At first sight, the whole place with its over-crowded hotels and its packed café terraces looked as though a Radical Congress were on at Tours. It was a kind

## EXODUS

of comic nightmare. To make the frivolous picture complete, even Lop, the village idiot of the République des Camarades, was there, toddling along on his flat feet, and proclaiming that he would still save France. It occurred to me that things couldn't be worse if Lop *had* been Dictator of France these last few years.

Met Lechon of the Polish Embassy. He was full of optimism. "*L'état major est très confiant*," he said. Also ran into that dark chap from *Le Jour*—(a nasty bit of work, like a French screen villain with large hooked nose and little black moustache)—is his name Delpeyrou? "*La guerre sera finie en Novembre —la victoire sera gagnée sur la Loire.*" I looked at him doubtfully. Was he pulling my leg? What was the use of talking such tripe? He added that if only ten British divisions could be sent to Paris at once, even Paris would still be saved.

The meeting place with the Gilbert gang was in the café opposite the hotel. As I was going there I ran into a familiar face, M. Jacquin, one of the old *huissiers* of the Chamber of Deputies. No easy optimism about him—"Quel massacre, quel massacre de la jeunesse française," he said, with tears in his eyes. "*Ces Allemands, ce ne sont pas des hommes, ce sont des bêtes féroces.*" He seemed convinced of the Germans' invincibility—though he added, not very convincingly, "*Ah, on finira par les avoir quand-même.*" He cursed Daladier and the politicians generally, and the ballyhoo in the Press. He said he was glad his son was only 17; but the chief *huissier's* elder son—the fat one—was in the army, and he was



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

very anxious about him. M. Jacquin was staying at Vouvray and had come into town for the day to buy some shoes. He did not think Parliament would assemble at Tours: "*Tout ça c'est de la foutaise*," he said. "We shan't stay long at Tours." I bought him a Vittel-cassis.

Crawling from one café to another, from one restaurant to another, was an all-day occupation at Tours. There was really little else to do. One just talked and listened to talk. What a life!

We all went to a restaurant in the rue Nationale for lunch. It was very crowded but in the end we got seats; hors d'œuvres, and fish and roast beef and strawberries. There was certainly no shortage of food at Tours. After lunch I went to the Press place; typed a short message to the paper, handed it to the British censor, a small stupid-looking youngster in uniform who promised to pass it on to Press Wireless. Hung about aimlessly at the censorship place and in the café in front of the *pissotière*. Saw Reggie Maynard, who, as usual, looked jovially pessimistic. Then back to the hotel. Gilbert was going to have dinner with Reggie, so I went with Cosandier, Gaby and the other women to a little restaurant Cosandier had discovered in a small side street. It was called the Café de la Lune, and we had a lousy 16 franc *prix fixe* dinner. After dinner, it occurred to me to go and find out what the censors had cut out of my message. Press Wireless knew nothing about it, and couldn't find my message. In the end I got hold of Scott Baillie, who rummaged round the British censors office, where he found *both* copies of my message in

## EXODUS

separate files, and none gone to the Press Wireless. The small fellow had just forgotten to send it off. A lot of these young chaps with cushy jobs don't know even their cushy jobs. The message was sent in the end; too late, of course, for the early editions. (The next day I ran into the culprit—he apologized, most frightfully sorry, it won't happen again; well, what does one say in such cases?)

There was a full moon over Tours that night when we returned to the hotel. "If there isn't an air raid to-night I'm a Dutchman," said Gilbert, looking at the sky. And somebody at the hotel said the German wireless had announced that Tours would be bombed to-night. Gaby and Marion and I went out for a stroll. Everything was still. We bumped into a refugee sleeping under a tree. When I went up to my room, Cosandier was already asleep. This luxurious room with a private bath and hot and cold water seemed so incongruous. I felt restless and expected the bombing. However, I got to sleep in the end.

*Thursday, 13th June.*

One of the Americans—I forget who—has just arrived from Paris full of gruesome stories. At the stations people had been trampled to death. Yesterday morning it was pitch black in Paris: one had to go about through the smoke screen with a pocket-torch—one couldn't see even half-way across the Place de la Concorde. In the darkness the sun was a pale-green disc. The shops were closing. It was almost impos-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

sible yesterday morning to find a café where they'd serve coffee and *croissants*.

Last night Paul Reynaud made a statement about going on fighting in North Africa, but clearly suggesting that the Battle of France was going to be lost unless France got immediate help. An appeal, he said, had been addressed to Roosevelt. England was not mentioned. We are, apparently, not helping the French any more. Perhaps we are right not throwing good money after bad. The statement was important as an enunciation of the principle of the *lutte à outrance*. But was not Reynaud expressing a purely personal view? And was he not, at the same time, preparing France for a capitulation? Was the way he was placing all the responsibility on America very wise?

After going to Colonel Thomas's conference (now held at the Conservatoire de Musique with a lot of pianos all over the place and with a big garden round it) I ran in the rue Nationale into Coutard and Madame. "*En somme c'est la capitulation pour demain?*" he asked. That's what he thought Reynaud's statement meant. He looked utterly dejected. So did she—her poor fat painted-up face looking so infinitely helpless.

I remembered their studio at Passy—she the daughter of a rich stockbroker; he had obviously married her for her money; and yet he now seemed quite fond of her. I remembered all the old Paris Columbia University gang of 1927—with whom I had first met them; and all the fun. Mme Coutard wrote abstruse books about the Saracens, or some-

## EXODUS

thing; probably got them published at her own expense; while he wrote competent Payot octavos on population problems, etc. And now? In his ordinary soldier's uniform he looked so poor and wretched. Who would have thought him a successful Paris bar-rister? Also met Louis Lévy of the *Populaire*. He was in a state of gloom. "*Mais alors toute la terre devient Nazie?*" He looked pathetic in his War Correspondent's uniform over his fat round body, and the olive beret over his paunchy baby face. "*On ira en Angleterre—je vais m'engager dans l'armée anglaise.*"

I went back to the censorship where Hugh Green of the *Daily Telegraph* had, he claimed, discovered a way of sending press telegrams at a cheaper rate by Radio-France. We went to the French military censors, then to the G.P.O. At the G.P.O. the woman told him to put the telegram on the table behind her—she would take care of it. I thought we had better make sure whether Radio-France really functioned. Went into a side door; inquired; answer: "*paraît qu'ils sont arrivés mais ils ne fonctionnent certainement pas.*" Well, well—a pretty mess.

Spain declared non-belligerency—in other words pre-belligerency last night. Picquart thinks Bordeaux will be a lovely spot once the Spaniards have started moving. There is more and more talk of moving from Tours to Bordeaux. In the Press room in the meantime they go on papering the decrepit walls with a dirty-blue paper, and sawing planks.

Major Vautrin, now attached in some capacity to Paul Reynaud's office, invited the Press this after-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

noon to Comert's office at the back of the ramshackle "Ministry of Information." Vautrin's handsome face seemed lined and had a kind of dead grey colour, but he spoke in a firm voice.

"I want to comment to you," he said, "on the message M. Reynaud sent to President Roosevelt, which you have all seen in to-day's paper. Our line (*dispositif*) from the sea to Montmédy is coherent and is still holding out; only our men are being submitted to fearful pressure. Many of the troops have been in the front line for ten days, almost without sleep or respite. Our losses have been very serious. The Germans opposite have during the same period been changing the front line troops every two or three days. In spite of this the *dispositif* has managed to hold out. There have been local counter-attacks taken on the initiative of small units; but a great counter-offensive has proved impossible. The general picture is one of a Front which still holds, but which is subjected to most terrific pressure. Infantry, scarcely supported by tanks, has to fight against armoured units. There is great German superiority in the air, except in those sectors where we have been able to use the new American bombers. But let us make no mistake; we need a lot more bombers, a lot more tanks *urgently*. Yes, the front is still holding out; but it is wearing thinner every day, every hour, and is becoming less and less capable of any offensive action. For ten days and nights our men have suffered fearful physical fatigue. Some of our divisions have been attacked, have counter-attacked, have been attacked again, all within twenty-four hours. Some have had to retreat over 100 km. in the last few days. There have been heavy losses; in most cases it is impossible to find fresh troops to relieve them; the Front is holding out with rapidly diminishing numbers; while the Germans have thrown 120, perhaps 150 divisions into the battle. We must have more material at once."

## EXODUS

I asked Vautrin why with five million men mobilized France had only forty-five divisions in the field. He gave me some involved explanation about six or seven men in the rear to every man in the front line; "it's the same in all armies," he said. I couldn't see it; especially why the front-line people always had to be the *same* ones. Vautrin added that Paris was not being evacuated; and that the public services would continue normally.

The papers say Paris has been declared an open town.

I type 200 or 300 words about the extreme gravity of the situation, Reynaud's statement, etc. The damn thing will probably cost the paper about £7; really journalism is becoming impossible. After that I go down to the café in front of the *pissotière*. Talk with Liebling of the *New Yorker*, who's booked a seat for the Clipper on 22nd June. He is not in a funny mood; he says he is ashamed of the isolationist attitude of some of the writers on the *New Yorker*. But he is convinced America will come in; very late, but she will. Others sit about—some with typewriters—David Scott, in his green beret and War Correspondent's uniform, André Glarner, Cardozo the bemedalled, Green, Knickerbocker and others; later Reggie Maynard turns up. One of the Embassy chaps appears and reprimands me for "alarmist talk." I ask him whether he thinks the situation is so very pretty? "No, but you mustn't say so publicly in cafés." Gilbert takes me aside, accuses me of indiscreet talk; says I've been reported by *Deuxième Bureau* spies to the French authorities

who have passed it on to the British. Damn fools. They had better keep an eye on the Fifth Column chaps—plenty of them. Handler is there; he thinks the Fifth Column are working hard; Laval and Flandin will have a popular argument: "We were *Munich-oids* because we knew this would happen, and we wanted to spare you this."

Last night, by the way, we met at the hotel an American airman—Mexican looking or Cuban; we couldn't quite make him out. He reminded me of Del Vaye, the Cuban Franco agent I met in Barcelona. Gilbert thought him fishy. He seemed merely dumb to me with his constant clamour for booze. With his moustache he looked a little like Douglas Fairbanks. He was training somewhere, but was rather vague about that side of things. He said he had been here for three weeks and hadn't done any flying yet.

I go with Gilbert and Reggie to the Univers bar. There are lots of British War Correspondents there talking about nothing in particular. We drink champagne at ten francs a glass. The hotel was commandeered for the Senate, but except for Paul-Boncour, whose white *perruque* I notice in the lounge, most of the Senators seem to have departed. There is going to be no meeting of Parliament at Tours. As we go out I run into Gordon Waterfield, just from Paris, in War Correspondent's uniform, and very dirty and sweaty. I offer him a bath and shave which he gratefully accepts. He thinks journalism is a mug's game from now on, and is frightened of being trapped in France. He wants to get to England to join the army.

## EXODUS

Picquart, who had arrived yesterday, said it took him ten hours to travel the first twenty-two miles from Paris. Lots of cars had got stuck on the road for lack of petrol through driving first gear. Many people on the road were in terrible distress. Mrs. Picquart had tears in her eyes—but she said nothing. One realized only too well how she felt about France.

At lunch I read bits of Péguy's *France*. It made me desperately unhappy—particularly that glorious passage about the "*peuple de Paris, peuple roi . . .*"

*Friday, 14th June.*

Go out of the hotel with Cosandier into the crowded Place Jean Jaurès—they *would* call the main square in a town south of the Loire after Jaurès—*de la Nation armée*, blast it. Cars, cars, cars. People sit and stand about in cafés. Lorries with scores of men and women standing on them come into Tours—evacuated workers? Tired-looking people in cafés—they must have slept anywhere—in cars; in the open; or they may not have slept at all.

It rains; it just *would* for the refugees, when it didn't for Hitler's invasion. Cosandier and I have coffee at a counter—with hot *croissants*. There's a kind of dismal look on all faces. Only one young man, unshaven, unwashed, laughs loudly as he orders more *vin blanc*. He's drunk.

I meet Gordon Waterfield who is about to leave for Bordeaux. Havas, he says, are packing up. On to Colonel Thomas's conference at the Conservatoire de Musique. He is no longer there. He must have beaten



it as he already did, that last day in Paris. At the Ministry of Information the Havas people are running about with suit-cases. *On fout le camp*. I meet old Picot de Pledran of the *Action Française*. "*On s'en va*," he says. "*Où?*" "*A Bordeaux*," says he in a deadly voice. "*Pauvre France, pauvre France, pour en arriver là*." I want to tell him that his *Action Française* chaps have a good share of responsibility for what has happened; but it isn't a time for polemics; and I am sorry for the old boy. He says that Maurras is at Poitiers, and that they have been publishing the paper there; but he doesn't know what will happen now.

I walk rather aimlessly about the streets, looking for Gilbert. The traffic is getting heavier. Mme Coutard, rouged, fat, pathetic-looking asks me to sit down at her café table. "*Alors c'est la capitulation demain?*" she asks. I say I don't think so. "*On fera peut-être la lutte à outrance*," I add unconvincingly. "*Et d'ailleurs*," I add, remembering yesterday's unpleasantness, "*je n'aime pas discuter ces choses-là dans les cafés*." Coutard, in his soldier's uniform, arrives. He talks about the war. "*On a écrit le Discours de la Méthode en Touraine*," he says, "*on l'applique en Prusse. C'est le triomphe de la méthode*."

Paris, Paris. God knows what's happening there. Are the flowers still growing in the Tuileries? Poor old Uncle Peter. Gaby has just come in; she says Knickerbocker has just heard the Germans have entered Paris. I am in the hotel lounge at Tours, sitting in a red plush arm-chair. . . . There are

## EXODUS

cheap lace curtains on the windows, and the proprietor looks like Senator Henry Roy. . . . What a setting for such a wallop over the head.

This morning on the way to the censorship I ran into Albert. He had a kind of leer on his face. "We've lost this war. It's the fault of that disastrous man, Winston Churchill. . . ." I didn't want to argue with the swine. "I think we'll go on with the war in England," I said. "Oh, don't be silly," said Albert.

They are all buzzing off; and the hotel is getting empty. What's the hurry? The censorship, I am told, will be open only till 12 o'clock. I hurriedly write a short piece on hotel notepaper—chiefly to tell the paper where I am and where I am going. Outside the censorship I run into Joxe and Dennery of the Centre de Politique Étrangere, the French Chatham House. They look lost; they won't talk; they are dashing off somewhere with their little suit-cases in a great hurry. Later I again meet the Coutards. I kiss that fat ugly Betty good-bye; she cries. She looks so pathetic. Then a few minutes later, in front of the Hôtel de Ville (where they were going to hold a meeting of the Chamber of Deputies) I again see Coutard—"Vous partez maintenant? Il faut partir vite. Ils sont, paraît-il, déjà à Chartres." Chartres, Chartres—"cette Beauce, immense comme la mer" . . . And tanks, tanks, tanks, rattling over it.

Mrs. A., with her absentmindedness, will get us sunk some day. To-day she lost the key of her car. We spent two hours looking for it. In the end, Cosandier had to open the car with a hairpin. The streets

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

are getting emptier. We are packing. I am bad-tempered with Marion; I am fed-up with Mrs. A.'s two dogs, who have piddled all over the place in the bedrooms. I pay the bill. I think of Paris, of the view on to the Seine; of Lyosha and old Peter and the rest. Gilbert thinks it may take two or three days to get to Bordeaux. We may have to camp out. We buy candle lanterns—old-fashioned things, looking as though they belonged to an old cab. The ironmonger can't understand what we want them for. I discover the Matisse has got soaked with the rain pouring down on the luggage last night.

About six, just as we were going to the ironmonger's to buy more things, the gunfire started and the sirens went off. We scuttled into the hotel, and I escorted the women into an *abri*—deep and vaulted, and pretty well intolerable with heat and lack of air after a few minutes. There are tables and chairs there; but the crowd grows bigger and bigger. There are many old women there. They grumble—*Ah, les salauds, pour en arriver là, quel malheur, quel malheur*. I want to go out and look, but the women insist on coming with me; so I stay. However, I can't stick the heat much longer and get out. There is a kind of garage shed in the yard next to the *abri*. I find Gilbert and Cosandier there looking at the half-dozen Nazi 'planes flying in circles. A few moments before, the fragment of an A.A. shell fell in the yard a few feet away from Gilbert. The bombing is heavy, but a good distance away; they are concen-

## EXODUS

trating on the aerodrome. (Later there was a woman in tears at the hotel—her husband, an officer at the aerodrome was late for dinner. However he turned up in the end; a fine young face and white hair. The damage caused by the raid was very small, he said; an old 'plâne was wrecked and one man was slightly wounded.)

At last the raid is over; though the all-clear hasn't been sounded yet. It has stopped raining; we go to buy oilcloth for the Matisse, and also some candles. The shopkeepers look matter-of-fact. We then go on to a café, where we have coffee and some *tartelettes aux fraises* which Gaby had bought. The *patron* says he has been doing a roaring trade these days; all the apéritifs have been sold out. He doesn't know if he'll get any more.

Back to the hotel. It is now nearly empty. The eyes of the girl at the cash-desk are red with weeping. We have dinner at the hotel. The morose old waiter is in a bad mood. He says he was in the last war; things were managed differently then. He grumbles, especially when Gaby asks in her film-star way for this, that and the next thing. "*Adressez-vous au maître d'hôtel*" is his usual sulky reply. We drink vin de Chinon; it's not good—peppery. Cardozo and Walter Farr are still at the hotel. Gilbert decides we shall leave early to-morrow morning. We have booked rooms and tell them to waken us at 3.30.

As we all sit in the dark lounge before going to bed, two plebeian Paris women come to the hotel. They say they've got a young woman and a baby in a lorry—they have travelled for three days, all the

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

way from Paris. Are there no rooms? "*Nous sommes de Paris, du 14e.*" We talk about the women to the *patron* who (slightly reluctantly) says they can come and sleep in the lounge till our rooms are empty. One of the women is a pug-dog-faced old thing. We tell her the Boches are in Paris. She and the other woman begin to weep. I feel dreadfully sorry for them as they sob silently, thinking of their Paris, their 14e, behind the Gare Montparnasse. Marion and I accompany them to the station where the lorry is. I offer to carry the pug-dog's suit-case. She won't let me. "*Mais je ne vais donc pas vous la chiper,*" I say jokingly. She gets more *méfiant*e than ever. On the way to the station she asks if I'm British. "*Et pourquoi n'êtes-vous pas mobilisé?*" I explain about my leg. She gets still more *méfiant*e. When at last we find the lorry, the two women start a long discussion with a soldier and the baby's mother. In the end they say non-committally that they'll come later. A rather frigid "*Merci Madame, merci, Monsieur.*" That's another side of the French character.

Later, another woman with a neat little girl of four arrives. We make the same arrangement for her. She, at least, is grateful.

On the stair I meet a woman who tells a long story of how she was machine-gunned between Dourdan and Étampes. Ten people were killed. She had to abandon her car. A nice story with which to start a new bit of the exodus! *Tant pis.* Dourdan?

*Nous avons pu coucher dans le calme Dourdan.*

*C'est un gros bourg très riche et qui sent sa province. . .*

## EXODUS

Poor Péguy with his *calme Dourdan*! We all go to bed. Gilbert, Cosandier and I in one room, Marion and Gaby in another, Mrs. A. and her litter in a third. It's a lot of money for three hours' sleep; but, hell, what does 100 francs one way or the other matter now? Gilbert didn't sleep for more than an hour; I sleep well. Get up, find time to shave. All is ready by 4.30.

The night before, in the hotel hall, I ran into that awful bore, the chap who writes for some Latvian papers. He looks like an old-fashioned German music master and talks every language with a Riga accent. At the Chamber he used to pester the life out of everybody with inane requests for prophecies. There *are* people like that. Yet, poor devil, I felt sorry for him. He looked exhausted. He had walked 30 or 40 miles—a panic-stricken person with just nowhere to go. He begs us for a lift. I can't do anything about it. Neither can Gilbert. He's already promised a lift to the *Temps* chap and his wife. Gilbert listens in a bored way to the old bore's lamentations about the egoism of people as he has observed it in the last few days. My last sight of him at three the next morning was just this: the old bore lay crumpled up in an arm-chair in the lounge, fast asleep. It is strange, this dreadful ease with which one can say good-bye to people these days, even to people one is fond of, knowing you will never see them again. If you began to dwell on the thing, you'd be a nervous wreck in no time; hence one's automatic resistance to too much emotionalism.

Was it last night, or the night before? There were

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

three soldiers in the hall. Gilbert tells them the British are sending lots of troops to the Seine—"tenez seulement pendant dix jours." Two of them agree; the third, a baldish fellow of about 40 simply says: "*La question ne se pose même pas.*"

Later at Bordeaux Reggie tells me a lovely story about that pompous old bird, Sir Evelyn Cope. He was staying at a château near Tours; most of the official people stayed well *outside* Tours, just in case. When Reggie arrived there he found a letter in Sir Evelyn's writing lying on the desk.

Mon cher Préfet et ami,  
J'ai le plaisir de vous informer que je suis en train d'installer à Tours les services de co-opération Franco-Britannique. Je vous serais bien obligé de . . .

The letter broke off at this point. By this time Sir Evelyn and the rest had already buzzed off to Bordeaux.

And so we leave Tours. It was 4.30 when we left. The streets of Tours were fairly empty at that hour, except for a good number of stationary cars. With us travel the ex-Copenhagen correspondent of the *Temps* and his wife—an insignificant pair. He was attached as Press officer to the French Legation; so after the invasion of Denmark, they were taken by the Germans in the special diplomats' train to Belgium, and were treated with great consideration on the way. The meals on the train were good.

Our caravan of three cars drives through the Touraine country, under a grey morning sky. We pass a town with a large factory, with crowds of workmen outside. There is the same bewildered look on

their faces—a look I had already seen all the way from Paris to Tours. The roads are teeming with cyclists going south. We pass through miles of vineyards—who's going to drink the wine? At the Mairie there's a large notice up: *Avis aux Italiens*. Reminds one that we are at war with Italy, too. I had forgotten about it. At Tours they were saying the Italians hadn't started any kind of military operations yet. We reach Poitiers without difficulty. The *Temps* man and his wife leave us at the railway station, where they hope to get a train for Limoges. We drive on to the other end of the town, and decide to stop at a café for breakfast. Opposite is a fruiterer's and grocer's shop. Mountains of strawberries, cherries, peaches, tinned food, sausages; dozens of chickens. How there can still be all this food after hundreds of thousands of refugees have been pouring through the town for days is a wonder to me. We buy strawberries and cherries and settle down to breakfast in the café. The *patron* puts on the table an enormous dish of butter and a gargantuan loaf of bread. As we have our *café au lait* from huge cups, we hear a terrific *engueulade* going on outside the café. An N.C.O. of the French Air Force on a motorcycle had been stopped by a special constable, who had asked for his papers. The N.C.O. refused to show him any. The special constable, with a blue brassard, flew into a fearful rage. He was an apoplectic elderly man; he screamed and yelled and shook his fists frantically, getting all purple in the face. I thought he'd have a stroke. A large crowd gathered round; some people were shouting that the N.C.O.



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

was a German parachutist. In the end he was taken off to the police station in a car, swearing French obscenities with an unmistakably pure French accent. People are nervous, jumpy and have parachutists on the brain.

We drove on, not along the main Angoulême road to Bordeaux, but by a side-road passing through Saintes. We drove very fast, through lovely wooded country, passing many cars, and other cars passing us at 100 km. an hour. The old Citroen was doing her job. This not being the main road, we even managed to refuel in one small town. Further along, at a level crossing, a large number of cars and buses (some of them the old familiar green Paris buses, with their windows blacked out) got stuck. We had to wait for a long time. It was a hot sunny day. We got out of the car, and sat on the grass by the roadside. We gathered a bunch of red poppies. While we were there one or two aeroplanes flew over us; were they friendly?

We stopped at Saintes, a large town with a cathedral and a lot of souvenir shops. It looked like an ideal holiday place; even the hotel where we went to eat was a kind of glorified seaside boarding-house. We weren't exactly on the sea; but the sea wasn't far away—it was only a few miles from here to La Rochelle. The boarding-house was crowded with people, most of them residents—chiefly well-to-do Belgian refugees. The usual *table d'hôte* lunch with hors d'œuvres and things, and sweet white Bordeaux wine *ad lib.*

## EXODUS

On to Bordeaux. Black clouds began to gather, and there were thunder and flashes of lightning. It began to rain. The rain battered against the windscreen. It was still raining heavily when we reached the main road. This presented the old familiar sight—buses, Paris cars laden with luggage, all going in one direction. The huge suspension bridge a few miles outside Bordeaux was well guarded by soldiers who examined everybody's papers.

Bordeaux at last. We drove through shoddy, sad-looking streets till at last we reached the Garonne. Cranes, cranes, and more cranes; and many ships on the river. We drove along the Quai du Maréchal Lyautey—what a great name to remember these days!—to the Préfecture. Gilbert and I left Cosandier and the rest in a café and went off. We found the Ministry of Information and the censorship at least nominally established in some large building near the Préfecture—or it may have been the Préfecture itself, I forget. I say “nominally”: because the whole place was in an indescribable mess. Nobody knew where anything was. I met Z. the Russian Parliamentary reporter from Miliukov's paper, *Poslednia Novosti*. He looked dejected and worried. “*On est très pessimiste ici*,” he said. “There was a semi-official note in last night's *Liberté*: very ominous. It seems to have been handed out by Chautemps. It clearly suggests capitulation.” He showed it me; it looked bad. I asked him what he was going to do. He shrugged his shoulders in a hopeless kind of way, and the tears came into his eyes. Clearly in this collapse of France the last remnant of a Free Russia

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

was also going to disappear and what a fine remnant too! What chance could the Russian Liberals under Miliukov have of surviving? They were Liberals, they were anti-Nazis; and their paper carried on a great cultural and literary tradition. They had built up a little highly civilized society of their own on the friendly soil of France, and had kept it up for twenty years. Miliukov himself, and his brilliant staff of journalists and writers like Bunin, Teffi, Aldanov, Modest Hofmann, Georgi Adamovitch—what a superb literary critic he is—Peskov, Prince Bariatinsky, Ossorgin, Alexandroff, Nemanoff, Zwibak-Sedykh and many others, old and young; here was still something left of Russia's progressive intelligentsia.

The thought that the French might capitulate right away seemed too horrible to take in; and yet—had not events been drifting that way for the last month? With Paris gone, was there any spirit left for a *lutte à outrance*? Reynaud had said at Tours that the French would go on fighting "in one province only, if necessary, in North Africa only, if necessary." But the Chautemps and the Baudouins were there to do their bit; and one never could tell. At Tours already, on the day Churchill came there on his lightning visit, I heard that Ybarnégaray and Baudouin and Chautemps and Prouvost had sounded very doubtful about any possibility of carrying on. We got worried. What if they were going to sign an armistice, and we got trapped at Bordeaux? It wasn't so funny. We went to the Hotel Splendide, a big garish caravanseraï

## EXODUS

where we saw Childs, the Press attaché, and other Embassy people. Childs drew up a list of the journalists present, and promised to let us know if and when there was going to be a ship; "but there mayn't be one," he said, "for a couple of days." Then on to the British Consulate, across the square. We found lots of English people there, making inquiries. The shipping man was very sympathetic; but said he had no information about ships; everything was very uncertain. It was said that German 'planes had dropped magnetic mines at the mouth of the Gironde. It was therefore very uncertain whether any ships actually at Bordeaux could sail. One was due to sail for Brazil to-morrow, but nothing definite was known.

After numerous parleys at the Consulate and at the Hotel Splendide we returned to our party on the *quai*. It was 8 o'clock. We looked enviously at the big grey Brazilian liner. There were, of course, no rooms to be got at any hotel at Bordeaux; but one of the Embassy people had given us the address of an Englishman who had gone away to the country for a few days; and if we could get the key from the concierge, we might be able to stay there. We weren't sure whether it was the rue d'Alger, or the rue d'Angers, or the rue d'Anjou. Our caravan of three cars drove through the drab dreary streets of the poorer parts of the town. A kind of petulant hopelessness was written on all faces. At last we found the house—but found it locked. In the houses on the other side of the narrow street people looked out of the windows. An old man, with a white beard and wearing for some reason

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

a red fez, grumbled against this invasion of Bordeaux by "a lot of foreigners." The women were more sympathetic. It transpired that somebody was staying in the house, and would probably be in later. We waited in a small café, where the morose and silent *patron* consented to give us some beer to drink with our sandwiches, but said that he couldn't at this hour be bothered making coffee. Eventually we found that the person occupying Mr. J.'s house had returned. He was a King's Messenger who had just come from Madrid, and was on his way to London—though he was not sure how he would get there. "I believe there is going to be an Embassy 'plane," he said. "But the Embassy people are not at all pleased at my sudden arrival here." With him was a "gentleman's gentleman," a nice sweet old Londoner; he thought that he, at any rate, would have to go by sea. The King's Messenger and the gentleman's gentleman were very appreciative of our difficulties, and took the intolerable invasion of the tiny flat with good-humoured stoicism. We slept, as best we could, on sofas, arm-chairs and on the floor.

Early next morning—it was Sunday, the 16th—I went to a little *bistrot* with Cosandier, the chauffeur, where we picked up a *Petite Gironde* printed on a single sheet. There was a war communiqué of sorts, showing that the Germans were now advancing wherever they wished to advance:

"In Normandy and south of Paris the situation is unchanged. Further east enemy detachments crossed the Seine in the Romilly region. Enemy pressure became more marked

## EXODUS

around Troyes and Saint-Dizier, and German advance units reached the Chaumont area. In Alsace the enemy attacked in the Neuf-Brisach area; a number of detachments succeeded in crossing the Rhine, though without breaking through any of our defensive positions."

In short, they were driving right into Burgundy. There was no news in the *Petite Gironde* about the Cabinet meeting which had taken place last night, except that the deliberations had been adjourned until the morning. If Tours with its Radical Congress atmosphere, complete with Lop, was a comic nightmare, that last day at Bordeaux was a tragic nightmare. This lovely, gentle land of France which we had all loved, was, we felt, rapidly disintegrating. This endless sitting about in cafés around the Hotel Splendide with the question hammering at our brains: "Is France capitulating?" was like an intolerable mockery of the past. Here we were, witnessing the end of France in the happy-go-lucky atmosphere of a provincial *café du commerce*.

And the British at Bordeaux were also, not unnaturally, worried by the question whether they could sail in time for England if France were to capitulate. Nor was the danger of a sudden occupation of Bordeaux by German troops landed by 'planes entirely out of the question. It was, after all, the only large Atlantic port still in French hands. Nantes and Brest had fallen, or were on the point of falling.

Outside the Consulate that morning I met Geoffrey Cox and George Millar who, with *Daily Express* enterprise, were going to do a round of all the sailors' and seamen's hostels at Bordeaux to see if they

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

could get any news of possible sailings. Some newspaper men were talking of hiring a trawler, and Knickerbocker, who greatly disliked the prospect of falling into the hands of the Gestapo, even thought it might be possible to buy one, if the Press stumped up enough money collectively.

The Cabinet was meeting "somewhere in Bordeaux." I discovered where it was, and, going there shortly after noon, I saw the Ministers coming out. Weygand was there, too. He looked extraordinarily unperturbed—almost pleased with himself. What were they hoping for? Paul Reynaud looked badly harassed. The only man I had a chance to talk to that day was Chautemps. I asked him if there was any likelihood of France continuing the struggle in North Africa. He looked an unhealthy yellow colour, and there was the usual furtive look in his eyes. "*Non*," he said, "*on se dirige plutôt dans l'autre sens*." He said no more, and went. *Dans l'autre sens*! That's, to say capitulation. Was Reynaud going to resign?

We spent the rest of the day anxiously, and in idle speculation. The large luxurious restaurant of the Hotel Splendide was packed all day. The waiters were over-worked and the service was slow; but we ate good and expensive food. Bordeaux, now the capital of France, was not going to disgrace itself. At the table next to ours sat M. Zaleski, the Polish Foreign Minister with a crowd of Poles. He said he knew very little; the French Cabinet were not keeping him properly informed; but he was fearing the worst. He seemed to distrust Baudouin particularly. Another Pole I knew told me that General Sikorski

## EXODUS

had sent a long memorandum in November to General Gamelin on Germany's *blitzkrieg* methods in Poland. After Gamelin's dismissal, the document was found among his papers *unopened*. There were no end of familiar faces at and around the Hotel Splendide that day. Reggie, and the charming Mrs. Maynard (complete with poodle); she had just arrived at Bordeaux, after driving an ambulance for three weeks "somewhere in France"; Pertinax, looking haggard and in a state of mental distress; also little Geneviève Tabouis, who, with a sad look silently pressed my hand with her frail little fingers. It was like a funeral. Other French anti-Nazi journalists were there, appealing pathetically to the British to be allowed on board—if there was going to be a ship. Pierre Comert was also there: he was still chief of some Press department. But was this Press department still in existence? It didn't seem to matter much, either to him, or to anybody else. Press cables of sorts continued to be accepted by "Press Wireless"; but there was really little to say that was likely to be passed by the censorship.

Later, in the afternoon I went for a walk along the quais of the Garonne. It was a hot summer day; I was still in France; why was everybody looking so unhappy? Here were the cranes, and the large ships, all intact; and cars and tramcars were running along the quais and over the wide bridges across the Garonne. Was the war real, or was it only a bad dream? I crossed the large square in front of the Hotel Splendide. It was a large open space, where they held fairs and exhibitions. They must have been



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

preparing for some kind of fair some time ago; for there were several half-built but now abandoned pavilions there: one of them called "Les Vins de France." In the centre of this open space was a dried-up fountain with weird-looking horses, some with frogs', others with tortoises' legs; from the fountain rose a large pillar, with a golden angel of liberty dancing on top. The incongruous thing was the monument to the Girondins. In the square were a number of British troops with their lorries. The French looked at them in a faintly hostile way—though nothing was said. They had come from somewhere farther up the coast.

I returned to the Splendide. The café terraces on either side were packed as before. "*Garçon, un pernod! Garçon, un demi! Garçon, un vittel-cassis!*" Any news of the Cabinet meeting? Rumours, rumours, rumours.

We hung about aimlessly for the rest of the afternoon. The question arose of going to La Rochelle where a small British ship was due in two or three days. The Consulate said there would be accommodation on board for 200—or 300 at the outside. Was it worth risking? It was said there were about 2,000 British people anxious to get away. At last, about eight, it was announced that the British at Bordeaux should be ready to leave Bordeaux for Le Verdon, the port on the mouth of the Gironde, at nine the next morning. It was no use going back to our Englishman's flat, at the other end of Bordeaux; we might miss the boat: the instructions might be changed during the night: one never could tell. So we all

## EXODUS

decided to spend the night in the cars, right in front of the Hotel Splendide. We had a dreary and expensive dinner at the blasted place, and the waiter tried to cheat us out of 30 francs.

At the end of it the news reached us that the French Cabinet meeting—the Cabinet had met four times since yesterday—had this time *really* come to an end; that Reynaud had resigned; and that Pétain was forming a new Cabinet. It was said that fourteen of the Ministers had decided in favour of separate peace talks, and that only ten had opposed this: among them Reynaud, Mandel, Dautry, Marin, Campinchi, Monnet, Delbos. The supporters of capitulation were the Generals, the Fascists and the Radical defeatists—among them Pétain, Baudouin, Ybarnégaray, Prouvost, Chautemps and Pomaret. Old Lebrun threw in his weight on the side of the capitulationists. Weygand, who was present is said to have declared that the military defeat was complete; and it was no use going on. Later that night I was shown a provisional list of the new Pétain Cabinet. It was a surprising list: none of the obvious defeatists of whom we had talked for years was in it. No Bonnet, no Flandin, no de Monzie, no Mistler, no Déat. Did it mean that this was a half-way house? Only, Paul Faure was said to have been appointed Minister of Labour. On the other hand, Admiral Darlan was also in the new Government; and Darlan had always been a good man, and very pro-British.

It was thought at Bordeaux that night that while the new Government would not capitulate, it would attempt to *negotiate* an armistice. But nobody really

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

knew anything definite; except that it all smelt pretty bad. And for us British it was high time we got out of France. That it should have come to this!

I remember that last night in France so clearly. At the Splendide everything was blacked out about ten. In the dim stone-panelled front hall a few people were still hanging about exchanging the latest information. I ran into William Henry Chamberlin; I had not seen him at Bordeaux before. He thought he and his wife would stay on for a little longer; if necessary, they could always get away to Lisbon and sail for the States. I had not seen him for some time. The last time I had dinner with them in their flat at Neuilly, the American military attaché was there. The Norwegian campaign was in full progress. The battle of Narvik had just been won; but the prospects at Trondhjem looked bad. The attaché thought that we could hold Narvik, but that the adventure in Central Norway was utterly crazy: "You haven't the chance of a snowball in hell," he said. "The obvious thing for the Allies to do when the Germans invaded Denmark," he said, "was to occupy Belgium and Holland. The French have the swellest army in the world—they could have done it easily." That night at Bordeaux I recalled the "swellest army in the world" remark; Lord, how even the experts, especially the experts, had been taken in! And no wonder Bullitt was later blamed for misinforming the United States Government on the real position in France. He knew no more than his military attaché.

In the hall of the Hotel Splendide, the couches and sofas and arm-chairs were filled with drowsy and sleep-

## EXODUS

ing bodies. During the great exodus in France, hotel proprietors were quite decent about that; they let people sleep, free of charge, in their halls and lounges.

We groped our way back into the street. Sleeping in the car seemed the best solution. The whole street in front of the hotel and much of the large open space around the Girondins column was crowded with dark stationary cars—with people sleeping in many of them. The big trees lining the street looked so still on that calm starlit night—my last night in France. An aeroplane was heard, at one moment, flying about somewhere, not far away. But there was no air-raid warning. A nice mess a bomb would have made if it had dropped among all these cars. Except for the cars, the street was empty; there were no lights in the houses; Bordeaux was sleeping. Sleeping? Could people sleep when their country was in its last agony? For things were *happening* all the time. German troops were advancing—and perhaps not so very far from Bordeaux. Paul Reynaud, at this hour, was said to be on his way for Nantes. And here in Bordeaux an old, old man was taking the destinies of his country into his frail hands. As I sat in the car, trying to fall asleep, I thought of Paris, of all these years in France. Was old "Uncle" Peter still going to go out to-morrow morning in his slippers and old coat to the laiterie Hauser across the street to buy the half-litre of milk? Was the proprietor of Paul's at the Pont-Neuf still saying he was going to "*foutre les pessimistes à la Seine*"? Was his *bistrot* with the funny paintings on the walls still open? and if so, who were his customers to-night? The new men—

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the new masters of France? At length I fell asleep in the car, and dreamed a confused dream about Paris. There were French troops marching across the Place de la Concorde, preparing to storm the Madeleine, a fortress held by the Germans. Ambulances were taking the wounded to the Café Weber—yes, just as they did on the 6th of February. Absurd; or perhaps not so absurd.

It was broad daylight when I woke up. Under a tree, near the car, Gilbert was sleeping on a mattress he had spread out right on the ground. He said he couldn't sleep inside a car, and had to stretch out. At the Hotel Splendide there was already much coming and going. The car-dwellers crowded into the *lavabo* to wash and shave. We then had coffee and *croissants* on the terrace. I bought the *Journal*. Large headlines:

Pétain à la tête du Gouvernement.

Le Général Weygand prend la Vice-Présidence.

M. Paul Reynaud a démissionné.

That's all. No explanation why. No indication of any sort. Instead, some bits of foreign news: *La réponse du Président Roosevelt à M. Paul Reynaud provoque la colère de Berlin.* "Le Cabinet Tataresco est démissionnaire." "Les Usines d'Amérique vont travailler à plein pour nous." "Les sirènes hurlèrent à Marseille et à ce signal 900 Italiens indésirables furent arrêtés." Also a grotesque piece of news: "The regular air-service between London and France will be re-established within the next few days." Lastly, General Duval's article: a kind of review of why France had lost the war.

## EXODUS

“ . . . Depuis Montmédy jusqu’à la mer, l’autre moitié de nos forces occupait une ligne d’ouvrages plus ou moins improvisés, à peu près *inexistants entre Montmédy et Charleville . . .*”

After a description of the break-through on the Meuse and the encirclement of the Flanders armies, the General proceeded :

“Privé des *deux-cinquièmes de ses forces* Weygand dut se défendre avec ce qui lui restait de Français et deux divisions britanniques sur la ligne Somme-Aisne. Toute l’Armée Allemande, 150 divisions, se rua contre cinquante divisions le 5 juin au matin. Nous nous sommes battus, un homme contre trois, un avion contre dix . . .”

Regarding Dunkirk, General Duval said that out of 330,000 men rescued, only 90,000 were French. Throughout the article, a faint anti-British undercurrent was unmistakable. The statement about the “two-fifths” of the French army lost in Flanders is, of course, tripe. They had only eight divisions there—though among the best armed.

It’s a warm sunny day. A lot of traffic in front of the Splendide. Everybody is packing up; tying up suit-cases on top of the cars; many are already leaving. A big trade is going on in second-hand cars. Mme A. sells her two cars for 20,000 francs, and goes and re-invests the money in furs and jewellery—which takes her a devil of a time. I don’t know if my francs are going to be worth anything once we get to England. But one is not in a mood to worry about that. Marion has a five-pound note, which she offers to lend me. In principle, only British subjects are supposed to sail to-night; but a good number of

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

others are admitted too. Several French people, Poles and Czechs are also given passes by Childs, the Press attaché. White slips of paper with "S.S. Madura" written on them. Reggie Maynard and his wife and Lord Kneller, and the Embassy people (except Malet, the Ambassador's Secretary) are not coming on our ship. They, and a few privileged Frenchmen—Pertinax, and Mme Géraud, and Mme Tabouis, and Emile Buré and his wife, are going on board a warship—a cruiser or a destroyer, I forget—right at Bordeaux. Pertinax looks grey with worry. Picquart comes to say good-bye. We urge him to come to England; but he says no, very firmly. "There is too much running away," he says. "This *is* my country; I must stay here whatever happens to it. I've got my little house down in the south; I'll be all right. We are old people." He is calm, and betrays no emotion. But Mme Picquart fails to come: she is probably too upset.

There is great bustle in the streets of Bordeaux. The tramcars are running as usual; and the shop windows in the Cours de l'Intendance are packed with goods—clothes, and hats, and cakes, and chocolates, and bottles of scent, and bottles of wine and what-not. At the *tabacs* alone many brands of cigarettes are sold-out. Looking down one of the side-streets from this shopping centre, I can see the cranes and the ships on the river.

Back to where the cars are. At last everything is ready. We leave. We drive through streets, jammed with cars and tramcars, to the north of Bordeaux, and then out into the open country. I had always wanted

## EXODUS

to see this sharp long blade-like peninsula between the sea and the mouth of the Gironde; it looks intriguing on the map. It is pleasant, but unexciting country, with vineyards and pine trees, with a road running through it as straight as an arrow. Many of the place names have a familiar sound—names often seen on bottles of claret and white bordeaux. We also pass through Lesparre—it occurs to me that this is Mandel's constituency. Mandel—one had heard a lot about him these last few days; he, at any rate, was putting up a good struggle against capitulation.

The country gets more sandy and wooded, and one can smell the sea air. We pass Le Verdon, and go on to the Pointe de Grave. Out of the pinewood we suddenly emerge into the open. An immense stretch of sand, and the wide mouth of the river, dotted with hundreds of ships, and, far beyond, the other side of the Gironde where one faintly distinguishes a town—it must be Royan. The sky and the river and the sea are a faint pale-blue, and the sands a faint pale-yellow. There is a light mist over it all; the ships look all the same lilac colour. To the left, on a hillock overlooking the ocean, is a large tower, shaped like a lighthouse—it's the famous Pointe de Grave memorial to the Americans who were the first to land in France in 1917. What a happy moment *that* was for France. What a sad moment *this* is for us—and for France.

The launch will not be ready to take us across to the ship until 4 o'clock. We have time. We have lunch in the little restaurant at the foot of the American memorial. (Awful to think that it was unveiled,



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

shortly before Munich, by Bonnet who made on that occasion a deliberately fatuous speech, which put the American isolationists' backs up.) We feel the bitterness of it all very keenly. Cosandier, the chauffeur, is particularly upset. We have a banal lunch with hors d'œuvres, and roast veal and fruit and cheese, and some sweet white bordeaux *en carafe*. The little restaurant with its wonderful view must have been a favourite place with day trippers from Bordeaux. At the counter, there is a large selection of picture postcards. I'd like to write some; but what's the good, with all communications upset, or cut by the Germans?

We learn that at twelve Pétain made a broadcast saying he was going to "inquire" about an armistice. Bad; but not unexpected. But a pretty effect the announcement is going to have on the troops who in many places are still resisting. Nobody likes the idea of being killed on the *last* day of the war. The announcement is sure to weaken what resistance there still is by ninety per cent. What *are* these people up to?

Somebody who has just come from Bordeaux says that there was this morning an attempted *putsch*, and that Mandel has been arrested. I didn't see any signs of a *putsch*; but the Mandel story seems possible.

At last the launch is ready to take us. We carry the luggage from the cars to the launch. As we say good-bye to Cosandier, he bursts into tears. Nearly everybody is weeping. To leave France, and to leave it like this, is hard.

## EXODUS

There is a large dirty-yellow ship some distance away, and with a yellow cross painted on it: it means it's been "degaussed" against magnetic mines; a kind of cable runs right round it: that must be it. I can never understand these things, and don't try to. S.S. *Madura*: she isn't just a ship; she's a liner! 11,000 tons, or something like that. She flies the Union Jack. I don't know if it really makes me happy to see it. Noisy, hearty British sailors help us up the gangway with our luggage. The sea is perfectly calm. The ship is already fairly crowded. There are lascar seamen on board; lots of them, in a variety of coloured clothes, and with expressions which, though polite, are not perhaps devoid of a twinkle of irony. Are they mildly amused because the pukkah sahibs are now being herded into the ship like a lot of bloody coolies? It's an Empire ship if ever there was one. She has come all the way from Kenya, round the Cape, and has been at sea for nearly a month since leaving Sierra Leone. There are only half-a-dozen passengers on board—but they get swamped in the crowd of refugees. Where are they? What do they look like? I heard about them; but didn't see them.

But this is only the first stage of the invasion. There is accommodation for 150 passengers; and so far, there are only 500 or 600 on board. But the ship fills up more and more as the hours pass. When are we sailing? Nobody knows. Perhaps to-night; perhaps in the morning. When we first got on board, there was still plenty of room in the smokeroom and dining-room; and we even had a drink in the smoke-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

room. I got Marion's fiver changed. Whisky and beer, and bottles of Schweppes, and Gold Flake and Players—all the paraphernalia of an English ship! We managed to get a couple of deck-chairs, though one of them broken, and found a cosy corner on the middle deck. It was a lucky find, though the chairs needed to be watched all the time, after a desperate attempt made by some young man to pinch them. By about eight at night, with more and more people being brought aboard, it was getting difficult to move about the ship. Gilbert's party had established themselves in the smokeroom, with sofa seats for the women; Marion and I and a young fellow called McMillan were at the other end of the ship, on the deck. He had been an English tutor, or something, at the Sorbonne, and loved Paris and French poetry. I had first met him at Bordeaux. A nice chap.

The last load of passengers brought aboard that night included most of the well-known Frenchmen—Comert, and Pierre Cot, and Henri Bernstein, and Eve Curie, and Julien Cain, the red-haired ex-curator of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and latterly a big bug at the Ministry of Information, together with his wife. But, apart from Pierre Cot, there was no sign of any of the prominent French politicians. The news they brought from the shore was that Mandel had actually been arrested that morning by Pétain; but that he was later released at the insistence of President Lebrun. The story told was that Pétain apologized for the "mistake"; Mandel thereupon asked for a written apology. Pétain wrote something on a piece of paper. Mandel looked at it closely and said with

## EXODUS

his characteristic nasal drawl: "*Mais non, Monsieur le Maréchal, ça ne va pas. Laissez-moi vous dicter ce qu'il faut dire.*" Whereupon, the senile gentleman sat down and meekly wrote out a flowery apology at Mandel's dictation. *Se non è vero.*

Anyway, the Frenchmen on board, and particularly the Cains and the Bernsteins were very much upset by this arrest of Mandel. It seemed the beginning of all sorts of new things in France *la douce*.

The feeding of the passengers had not yet been organized on board the *Madura*; for the invasion was still going on. So that first night we raked out a few tins, and had supper on *jambon Olida* and dry sausage in the smokeroom with Henry Bernstein, Eve Curie and Comert. The conversation flagged; everybody was more upset than he would show.

Soon afterwards we returned to our deck-chairs on the middle deck, only to find that one was occupied by a gent who had glibly laid down my coat beside it. We chased him away. It was getting dark, but we could still see the dim outline of the French coast, with the dark silhouette of the American war memorial. Suddenly there was great excitement on the lower deck. The lascars and the other seamen were running about like mad; and something was being done to the 3-inch gun on the stern. We suddenly heard the noise of an aeroplane engine; it grew louder and louder within a few seconds: then there was a sharp dry bang, followed by silence. The 'plane had dropped a bomb; but it had fallen into the water; hence the briefness of the explosion. For a second I thought it was merely the 3-inch gun firing. It was all a matter

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of a few seconds. I jumped up and looked: the 'plane was merely a dim speck in the dark sky. I covered myself up with a blanket and went to sleep. After all the emotional strain of the last weeks, one got fatalistic.

The 18th was a clear, lovely day. The sea was calm and dazzling in the morning sun. On the shore, one could clearly distinguish things: a few cars, and even the little restaurant below the American monument where we had lunch the day before. France—tragic France—was still there, so calm and peaceful. Far away, on the other side of the water, was Royan. One could distinguish the houses and villas and the sandy beach. There were still as many ships in the mouth of the Gironde as the night before.

The ship now seemed overcrowded beyond capacity. People were sleeping and lying and sitting everywhere—all over the decks and in the corridors and in the smokeroom and in the writing-room, which was reserved for children; and also in the dining-room where, during the night, people slept on and under the tables. What cabins there were had been reserved for invalids and old women. There were no ugly scrambles or rows; but there was a certain amount of cheating. Thus, young and buxom Georgia Smack, the roving correspondent and only woman journalist to have seen Stalin in a bathing-suit, was found to have serious designs on the berth reserved for an invalid lady of 87. The old lady, assisted by the purser, persuaded her to desist, and to make herself at home under the dining-room table. And there was, at least at first, a deplor-

## EXODUS

able epidemic of deck-chair stealing. But with a few rare exceptions, a few rare cases of selfishness, there was a spirit of great camaraderie on the ship. Conflicting instructions had been given at Bordeaux about the amount of food to be taken by each passenger; and some arrived without any. They were, however, in most cases, able to depend on a share in the tinned-food supply brought by others. The whole food problem was, however, a difficult one. Here was a ship with accommodation for 150 passengers, invaded by ten times that number of refugees. She had been on the high seas for weeks. At the Pointe de Grave the French had refused to sell the ship any food supplies—why was never explained; perhaps because of the uncertainty of the future relationship between the British and French currencies.

What feeding still went on in the dining-saloon was sporadic and unorganized; with hundreds crowding outside at the usual meal-times, and most of them giving it up as a bad job. So on the second day we were on board the captain decided that something rational must be done. He put the passengers and crew on iron rations, by having nine services of a quarter of an hour each for breakfast, and nine services of half an hour each for the second meal. He gave us all he had: that is, tea, marmalade and an almost unlimited quantity of bread for breakfast; and a plateful of meat, potatoes, rice and more bread for the other meal. Stewardesses handed out slips to the passengers, stating the exact time when they must appear for breakfast and the other meal. "This ticket is available **ONLY** for the hour indicated."

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Needless to say, everybody was very punctual. The crew did their best, including the lascar seamen; it was a first-rate piece of organization. Nobody went hungry. Altogether, we were lucky. We were lucky with our excellent captain, and lucky with the weather. In rough weather, with the ship crammed as it was, the voyage would have been an unspeakable nightmare.

However, on the second day—it was 18th June—while we still lay anchored off the French coast, there were a few alarming moments. A German aeroplane circled over us; but it was chased by a French fighter. As the two flew over our ship, we could hear the rattle of the machine-guns. The two flew right over the mouth of the Gironde towards Royan; and there the German bomber crashed in flames. We heard an explosive noise, and though the visibility was poor, we could see some smoke and flames a long distance away. Later in the day, we heard some bombs dropped somewhere higher up the Gironde.

Shortly before we sailed, some strange things happened on board among the French. Some of them were seized with a *crise-de conscience*. They decided that they could not and would not leave their France, whatever the hardships and whatever the dangers. The story of Mandel's arrest had already clearly suggested that a great anti-semitic drive was in preparation even in "Pétain" France. Yet a few hours before the ship sailed, Julien Cain, looking very agitated, asked me if he and his wife couldn't get back to the shore. "*C'est un drame! ma femme ne veut pas quitter*

*la France; et moi—eh bien, moi non plus.*” He was in great anguish. Soon afterwards a launch brought a few more passengers on board, and took the Cains back to France. And not only them, but several other French people. When it came to the point, they decided, for better or for worse, to stay in their own country. There had been several *crises de conscience* like that among the French. The first night we were on board there was a Frenchwoman who insisted on being taken ashore; she came back to the ship the next morning; but in the afternoon, she went back to France again—this time for good.

At last, at 6 o'clock on the 18th of June we sailed. After a dull day, with a few showers, the sun came out. The sea was blue and perfectly calm. We sailed almost due west; and before very long, we lost sight of the French coast. The last we saw of it was the dim outline of the American war memorial. There was a glorious sunset that night with bright streaks of scarlet and orange and violet. The coast was no longer to be seen; we were far away from anywhere; from all the anguish and agony of gentle France. Some distance away, on the calm lilac sea, was another yellow ship with a yellow cross, and, on the other side, the dark, reassuring outline of a small destroyer. The men on board the *Madura* took turns, looking out for submarines; but there were none.

Most of the passengers on board were British—business men from Bordeaux, journalists from Paris, English people from Belgium now on their second or third exodus, and also some slightly bewildered



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

specimens of the retired-colonel class from the Riviera—that is, the last people in the world who expected to see their well-ordered existence disturbed in this way. Of the official people on board we had only Malet, the Ambassador's secretary from Paris, who was visibly interested in the voyage, in spite of its discomforts, and was not grudging the other Embassy people their presumably more comfortable voyage on board H.M.S. ——. In our little corner of the deck we had next to us a pretty young Englishwoman, the wife of an English cinema producer; she had come all the way from Brussels. She was taking it all in very good humour. Another young woman on board even went so far as to wind her way through the crowded decks dressed in wild Juan-les-Pins-like beach pyjamas. The people I knew best, of course, were the journalists. All the Parisian eggs of Fleet Street, and Printing House Square, and Cross Street, Manchester, had been put in one basket. It occurred to me that if the ship were sunk the British Press would lose all its French experts at one fell swoop. What an easy solution to the problem of finding them jobs in London! They were all here: the whole Paris staff of Reuters, Martin Herlihy, Gordon Waterfield, and James King, and Nick Bodington and the rest; the charming and always sweet-natured Jose Shercliffe of the *Daily Herald*; the earnest serious-minded staff of the *Daily Telegraph*—Wareing and Hugh Green; the natural, spontaneous, youthful fellows of the *Express*—that admirable correspondent, Geoffrey Cox and bright young George Millar, both itching to get into the Army. With Millar was his pretty red-

## EXODUS

haired wife, in A.T.S. uniform. The *News Chronicle* was represented by David Scott. Always keen and passionately eager for "stories," Jerome Willis represented the *Evening Standard*. The *Times* men were Thomas Cadett, looking very P. & O.'ish in his canary pullover, and Bob Cooper, still in war correspondent's uniform. Of the Americans, there were only Knickerbocker, and Mickey Wilson of the I.N.S. Mickey is, of course, an Ulster Irishman, though he has adopted the accent and the tough newspaper-guy manner to perfection. Percy Philip, the British-born correspondent of the *New York Times* was not on board. He must have stayed behind to give his paper the benefit of his close knowledge of France's new rulers.

There were several wounded British soldiers on board. On the morning of the third day, two young fellows, both with leg injuries, came and sat in our deck-chairs. Both had been on the Somme. They didn't think highly of the French, especially of the French officers. And when the French officers buzzed off, they said, the soldiers just beat it too. "It was the fault of the French we lost the first B.E.F." On the Somme they hadn't seen any fighter 'planes for a fortnight, though the Germans were using an infernal lot of dive-bombers. They said the Germans doped their soldiers; the young Nazis went ahead against any obstacle, shrieking *Heil Hitler* and screaming like lunatics. They told stories of disorderly retreats. The British soldiers, they said, were left in the lurch. Four British divisions were now holding a

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

bridgehead round Nantes. Would they get away in time?

On their way south, the two men found everything in a state of complete disorganization. Sometimes they had to depend on refugees for food. The French authorities were useless. From the hospitals where they were taken everybody had fled. In one there were still some wounded Senegalese, with nobody to look after them. The Foreign Legion, they said, fought well, and so also did the Poles. But the French—no. The British offensive against Abbeville failed because the French on the right did not keep it up. In March these two lads were on the Maginot Line; and they described the patrolling. "The Germans," one of them said, "don't wear hard boots but soft ones; so when they move about, you don't hear them; their helmets also are felted so you don't hear them bumping into tree branches. The German patrols communicate by bird calls. When the Germans go crazy they kill everything in the deserted villages—cats, dogs, cows." "Where's the war to go on?" I ask. "Why, here on the Channel, of course," they say. Nice fair-haired lads, one from Kent, the other from Belfast, judging by his accent.

And so we sailed towards England. And as I looked out on the blue calm sea, far away from anywhere—for the coast of France was far away, and could not be seen—it was hard to imagine that only a little over a week ago we were still in Paris: that I sat by the window that last night, and looked at the Louvre and the starry sky above. There was a faint smell of

## EXODUS

burning trees that night, and the sound of bombs dropping somewhere not very far away. "We shall be very homesick for Paris, don't you think?" I said to David Scott. "Yes, I know we shall," he said sadly.

On the morning of Friday, 20th June, we entered the bay of Falmouth. The country around looked so green and peaceful and the little brick houses almost smug. What were they, seaside boarding-houses? Cornwall—I had never seen Cornwall before; I did not think it would look so green. For nearly a whole day we lay anchored in the bay of Falmouth. There were many ships in the bay—and no doubt every man on each of these ships had some grim stories to tell. And still, the country looked so calm and peaceful—a different world from the France we had left behind. It gave one a strange thrill to see England—England the last free country in Europe. Hackneyed quotations ran through one's head—*Richard II*, and Blake and Tennyson.

At last we were taken off. It only then occurred to me that we were *news*, quite big *news*. Outside the gates of the pier, on the promenade, the whole town had assembled to greet us. We were *refugees*. It was growing dark. A green bus drove us through the waving crowds to a large building—a theatre or a concert hall—with a garden around it—where we went through the customs and passport formalities. Everybody was friendly and sympathetic. "What an *awful* time you must have had." As I was going in, a woman came up and said: "How are you? How are you feeling?" "Very well, thank you, how are you?"

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

She smiled; and then gave me a label with a mysterious sign scribbled on it: she was the Medical Officer of Health! After the passport formalities, we were ushered into the garden, and into a large kind of hut, where we were treated by the local ladies to tea and lemonade and cold meat, and cheese and Cornish patty, and lots of other good things. And then, after a night in a comfortable five-and-sixpenny boarding house bed, on to the station. The porter stuck "Paddington" labels on the cases. Paris seemed very far away.

Only, just outside the station we had a last glimpse of France. Hundreds of French sailors were there who, only the day before, had landed here from Brest. They were glad to have got away. "*Avant de partir on a fait sauter l'arsenal de Brest. Toute la marine française est en Angleterre. Le Strasbourg et le Dunkerque sont à Portsmouth . . .*" Only one of the destroyers, they said, had been sunk.

Were the big units really at "Portsmouth"? We didn't know. But these sailors at Falmouth—they gave one a new faith in France, in the French people; even though, when we arrived at Paddington, the evening papers told us that the Bordeaux Government had already accepted Hitler's armistice terms.

## PART III

### EPILOGUE

“Mais que sert de lui sauver la vie, si l'on perd son âme? Et parfois m'envahit une tristesse sans nom, à contempler ce clair miroir de vérité qu'était la France, se ternir. En attendant, et nonobstant, les articles de Maurras, chaque jour, sont excellents.”

ANDRÉ GIDE, *Journal*.



## I

### THE SEEDS OF VICHY

Over two months have passed since the collapse of France. A great many things have happened in France since then to reveal more clearly the deep underlying causes of the breakdown. To say that the collapse was the work of a small Fascist clique who betrayed France and her people would be an exaggeration. To say that the Fifth Column and the Fascist clique prepared France psychologically for the collapse, and then took advantage of it would be nearer the truth, but it would not be a full explanation either. The causes of the collapse are numerous, and not all apparent. The French people themselves are partly responsible for what happened; and not only the leaders. One has to look a few years back.

Vichy is the ultimate crystallization—a crystallization brought on by disaster—of many things in the past with which close observers of France have been familiar for a long time. The Third Republic which was born at Sedan in 1870 was also mortally wounded at Sedan in 1940, and died a month later.

Perhaps the primary cause of it all was the war-weariness of the French people; that war-weariness which resulted from the fearful bloodbath of 1914-18, when France lost nearly 1,500,000 of her men. The thought of another war continued to fill French



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

hearts with profound dread. The pacifism of France, of the French people, was such that it often smothered their old instinct of national self-preservation. As the power of Nazi Germany grew, the pacifism of France became, if anything, increasingly acute.

France's system of alliances broke down between 1933 and 1939 simply because France was not ready to defend it. The thought of war was too loathsome to the French. In 1936 Goebbels boasted with impunity: "If we had been in the position of the French, and they had put a Hitler in power, we should have made war on them." But no suggestion of a preventive war could have received the slightest support from the French people. The question of a preventive war actually arose in May 1933—on the initiative of the Poles; but the French Government thought Pilsudski crazy—as well as the one or two of the French generals who agreed with Pilsudski: and had the French people been consulted, they would have thought the same. This was quite independent of anyone's attitude to the League of Nations, of which the Left approved, and the Right wholly disapproved. So the opposition to preventive war against Nazi Germany was quite independent of any political or juridical scruples.

In the years that followed, Hitler had no great difficulty in persuading the French people that he wished them no harm. Of course they did not really believe him when he promised them eternal peace; but they did believe that he had no intention of attacking France in the near future. The most blatant example of France's loss of her instinct of self-preser-

## EPILOGUE

vation was her failure to react to the German re-occupation of the Rhineland. When you tried to explain to Frenchmen the significance of the Rhineland *coup*, they often answered—"If we do nothing now, we can be sure of at least two years' peace." This does not excuse the utter blindness of the British Government and of British opinion to the significance of the Rhineland *coup* of March 1936; but the fact remains that the French people themselves were unwilling to consider its full implications. In the Sarraut Cabinet, Mandel alone was prepared to take the risk of a large scale military retort. Flandin, the Foreign Minister, would not hear of it. The "compromise" was embodied in Sarraut's angry but meaningless threats on the wireless. The new Polish offer to attack Germany was ignored.

Munich was another example. In my book *France and Munich* I explained at some length that it was France, much more than Great Britain which was responsible for abandoning Czecho-Slovakia. The French had a solemn treaty of alliance with the Czechs; yet they felt fewer scruples about letting the Czechs down than we did, who had given them no solemn undertakings. If Mr. Chamberlain flew to Berchtesgaden, it was because he knew that the French were neither ready nor willing to "march." In the light of the collapse of France, the story of the Czech crisis makes very illuminating reading to-day. All the seeds of the present collapse were already there: the pacifism of provincial France; the pandering to Hitler among certain French politi-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

cians; the "anything rather than war" propaganda in the Press; the widespread conviction that France was not equal to fighting Nazi Germany; the thought that *la jeunesse française* must be saved from war, if France was to survive at all; the agitation to the effect that England, though full of righteous indignation, was unprepared to fight—except "to the last French soldier."

The building of a vast system of frontier defences, later to be known as the Maginot Line, began in 1928. The decision was, in itself, a confession of weakness; and a manifestation of the French dread of another invasion. It has often been remarked that it was, if not materially, at least psychologically, incompatible with France's system of alliances. France's whole war machine was, in fact, defensive, and not offensive; and M. Reynaud, in his parliamentary speeches since 1933 never failed to emphasize this, and to point out that the French Army was not well suited to rush to the aid of the Poles or Czechs. But it was a point which could still be argued so long as the Rhineland was demilitarized; the French Army, it seemed, was still capable of striking at Germany's vulnerable Western flank if Germany attacked any of France's eastern allies. But the Rhineland *coup*, the importance of which was deliberately underrated in France, and totally misunderstood in England, was, in reality, the knock-out blow to France's system of alliances. In *The Destiny of France*, a book I wrote in 1936, I suggested that the day France acquiesced in Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland

## EPILOGUE

she condemned herself to the position of a second-class power in Europe. This was perhaps putting it a little crudely; but the idea was clear. M. Crû, the London correspondent of the *Temps*, in reviewing my book, got very angry, and said that the British public would not be "taken in by such nonsense," which, he said, reminded him of the nonsense in the German Press before 1914 which used to treat the French as a degenerate people.

The effect of the German reoccupation of the Rhineland, though not clearly understood by the French people (and the greater part of the Press did nothing to explain it to them) was very clearly understood in Poland, Roumania and Yugoslavia, as M. Delbos, the French Foreign Minister was to realize only too well when he went on his Eastern tour in December, 1937. The authority of France had declined in a terrifying manner. There was a growing conviction in Eastern Europe that France, encouraged in this by certain currents of opinion in Great Britain, would fight only if she were directly attacked: a view which was strongly to be confirmed at the time of the Czech crisis.

One of the chief reasons given by many leading French politicians at the time of Munich for not fighting for Czecho-Slovakia was that France *could not* fight, because her armed strength was inadequate. It was a good excuse, rather than a reason. The truth is that while Germany had been building up and organizing her army and air force day and night since 1933, France's armaments production, especially after 1935, failed to increase in anything like

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the German proportion and actually severely declined in 1936, 1937 and 1938, especially in the all-important branch of aircraft. For this there were many causes, with which I have dealt in my last two books. Briefly put, they were:

(1) the complete state of chaos in the aeroplane industry which in 1935 and 1936 was still working on the Denain programme of 1934, which was decided upon just before the great 1935 step-forward in aeroplane construction—with the result that the 'planes France was producing were wholly out-of-date.

(2) M. Pierre Cot's decentralization and nationalization experiment which took far too long, and slowed down production for a long time, with the result that early in 1938 France was still unable to turn out a single serially produced modern 'plane.

(3) the constant strikes and the introduction of the 40-hour week as part of the Front Populaire programme (actually it had not figured in the programme of January, 1936, but was forced upon the Blum Government by the strikers and the C.G.T.). In March and April 1938, for instance, under the short-lived second Blum Government, the aeroplane industry came to a complete standstill for nearly a month as a result of a new wave of strikes.

(4) Lastly, the French General Staff always showed a tendency to underestimate the air weapon. M. Pierre Cot, blamed for the "fiasco of the French Air Force," attributed it largely to the failure of M. Daladier to give the Air Ministry enough money.

The Labour agitation of 1936-7 and the great wave

## EPILOGUE

of strikes had also a great effect on the output of other armaments, notably tanks. Many of these were made at the Renault works, noted for the turbulent spirit of its 35,000 workers, mostly Communists.

The 40-hour week was abolished by the Daladier Government towards the end of 1938; but a lot of time had been lost, and it was not easy to make up for it.

So here are three indirect and distant reasons why France was not well prepared for the war: (1) the long-standing dread of war among the French people; (2) the defensive nature of the French war machine, with the Maginot Line as its basis—and the consequent loss of all the Eastern allies, and (3) the inadequacy of equipment, particularly in the air—the result, partly of routine methods among the French High Command, and even more so, of the Front Populaire period which had the effect of severely lowering and disorganizing the output of armaments, especially in comparison with Germany.

The reluctance of the French people to go to war was thoroughly exploited by a group of politicians who, not many years after Hitler's advent to power, began to think of France in terms of a "new European order." M. Déat, M. Montagnon, M. Marquet and other Neo-Socialists were among the first to think in such terms as long ago as 1933, when they broke away from the Socialist Party, and proclaimed the new slogan: "Order, Authority, Nation." M. Montagnon used to go about the Chamber lobbies, proclaiming: "*Nous vivons en pleine période révolution-*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*naire.*" Later, in 1935, he made a speech asking the Deputies not to underrate the dynamic strength and the beauty of the Nazi movement. M. Montagnon lost his seat in the 1936 election, and was lost sight of for some time; but, oddly enough, he made his reappearance in April, 1940 as the right-hand man of M. Frossard, the Minister of Information in the Reynaud Cabinet. M. Déat had, since 1933, distinguished himself as an ultra-pacifist on many occasions. His article, *Die for Danzig* published in the *Œuvre* in May 1939 created a great stir in France and produced an angry denunciation of M. Déat by M. Daladier, the Premier. M. Marquet, after a short spell of office under Doumergue in 1934, reappeared in the limelight again as Minister of the Interior in the Pétain Government which signed the Armistice. The Neo-Socialists had no great following either in 1933 or later; but they were a significant symptom of new ways of thinking—and on the Left at that.

The famous Paris riots of the 6th of February, 1934, are a sufficiently familiar story, which I myself have told on more than one occasion.<sup>1</sup>

In 1933, the first year of Hitler, France still seemed an unshaken and unshakable democracy; the Daladier Government then in office, lasted from January to October—a relatively long term of office which suggested conditions of great internal stability. Yet, even in 1933, apart from the split in the Socialist

<sup>1</sup> Particularly in *France in Ferment* (1934) in which the riots form the central episode.

## EPILOGUE

Party, there was at least one interesting "New Order" development—a striking departure from the traditional foreign policy that France had pursued for many years past: and that was the acceptance "in principle" by M. Daladier and M. Paul-Boncour, his Foreign Minister, of the Four-Power Pact, proposed by Mussolini, no doubt in agreement with Hitler. The idea was warmly supported by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—who was over-impressed by Mussolini and his troops, and who really saw no harm in it. But it was more surprising that the French, who *should* have realized all the New-Order implications of the proposal, should have agreed to it. This acceptance badly shook France's allies in Eastern Europe, and even M. Barthou's earnest efforts a year later to convince the Poles that France could be trusted to pursue her traditional policy did not succeed. The Four-Power pact was quashed by parliamentary opposition; but Daladier's and Paul-Boncour's first reaction to it suggested that something new was in process of development since Hitler's arrival at the Chancellery in Berlin. Later, Daladier still went on hoping for a direct Franco-German understanding. M. de Brinon's "peace-loving" Hitler interview in the *Matin* at the end of 1933, after Germany's departure from the League, was published with Daladier's express approval.

Now, the 6th of February, 1934 is a day which the *Action Française*, the various Fascist and semi-Fascist organizations in France who developed chiefly after that date, and the Neo-Socialists have often



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

described as "the beginning of a new French era." The circumstances which led up to the riots are perhaps too familiar to need recalling. The fall of the Daladier Government in October 1933 opened up—partly through the fault of the Blum Socialists—a period of governmental instability in France, and the authority of parliament had sunk very low by the time the Stavisky bombshell exploded. The fact that one Cabinet Minister and half a dozen other politicians were implicated in the scandal was sufficient to let loose a violent anti-parliamentary agitation both in the Press and in the streets of Paris. The most active agitators were the men of the *Action Française*, at that time the only strong and vociferous, if not numerous, anti-democratic body in France (apart from the Communists). Their street demonstrations to the cry of "*à bas les voleurs*," and their Press campaign had a snowball effect. The entire bourgeois Press joined in the chorus; and after the Chiappe episode, in which M. Daladier, the new Premier—he had succeeded Chautemps on 27th January—displayed a singular lack of coherence, a large part of the Paris people were whipped up into a riotous mood; and the street demonstrations of the 6th of February promised to develop into something more serious than Paris had seen for several decades. For several hours the rioters attempted to break into the Chamber of Deputies. Twenty people were killed and about 1,500 injured (over one-third of them policemen and mobile guards). "To avoid further bloodshed," the Daladier Government resigned the next day.

## EPILOGUE

The 6th of February has been described in a variety of ways. Some have dismissed it simply as "*un événement bien parisien*," which provided the dynamic youth of the capital with a lot of rough fun; others have called it a "Fascist conspiracy." There was in it a little of both. A very high proportion of the 50,000 people who threw stones and iron bars at the police in the Place de la Concorde, though dissatisfied with the Government, had no clear idea of overthrowing the Republic, still less of setting up a Fascist dictatorship. But the people working and directing the "military operations" behind the scenes had some rather clearer intentions. The Right-wing politicians were, for one thing, tired of seeing the Left-wing parties in power (the Radicals were then still, on the face of it, a Left-wing party, depending for its support on the Socialists) and they felt it was high time for a change in the majority; as there had already been in 1926, when Poincaré was brought in to save the franc after two years of Left *Cartel* government.

Only, the change this time was going to be more dramatic—and perhaps more far-reaching. Were there any schemes for setting up a new kind of government other than a plain National Government after the Poincaré model? The evidence shows that there was. A number of Right-wing politicians, both before and immediately after the 6th of February indiscreetly spoke of setting up a government at the Hotel de Ville—"if the Daladier Government failed to resign." Many people had a share in organizing the 6th of February. First, the *Action Française*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

leaders; then Chiappe, who was, among other things, doing his Corsican vendetta on Daladier; and a great many more. Chiappe was the chief of the *Gringoire* gang; his brother-in-law, Horace de Carbuccia was the owner of that disastrous paper. When the Germans entered Paris in June, they promptly accepted Chiappe as the virtual chief of the Paris town council, and are said to have shown him great courtesy and consideration. Chiappe's present role is uncertain. He certainly hoped at first to "co-operate" with the Germans; but it is possible that they prefer to him a man like Doriot.

While the riots were in progress outside, the Chamber went on with its stormy sitting, which continued to drag on, largely owing to the obstructionist tactics of the Right. The continued presence of the Deputies at the Chamber naturally added fuel to the furious flames of the riot outside. It is perhaps significant that the chief obstructionist at the Chamber was M. Henry-Haye, who in 1938 became an active member of that very peculiar organization, the *Comité France-Allemagne*, and who in 1940 was to be appointed Ambassador to Washington by the Pétain Government. But even if there were partisans of the immediate establishment of a Fascist regime in France, the greater part of the French Right felt that the moment for it was not ripe; and, as Colonel de la Rocque, though vague about his ultimate aims, was often to declare later, the 6th of February was "only a first warning." Instead of a Fascist Government, the seemingly constitutional national government of M. Doumergue was set up. It had, however,

## EPILOGUE

been brought into office by the outside pressure from the streets. Doumergue, an old, and not very intelligent politician, a former Radical but now with a strong Right-wing bias, tried to strike the attitude of a fatherly kind of dictator, especially in his broadcasts; but he was neither one thing nor the other. There were Radicals, including Herriot, in his Government; but Doumergue continued to be in close contact with the Croix de Feu. In the end, he was forced to resign after a conflict had arisen between him and the greater part of the Chamber and Senate over the constitutional reforms he was proposing to submit to the National Assembly at Versailles. Chief of these was the right of dissolution to be conferred upon the Premier—a measure with far-reaching implications. His departure was greeted by Léon Blum as “the first victory over Fascism.”

By that time a sharp reaction against the 6th of February was in progress in the country. The *rapprochement* between the Socialists and Communists with “anti-Fascism” as its slogan, had laid the foundations for what was to become, in 1935, the Popular Front. The Fascist Leagues (though they carefully refrained from using the word “Fascist” in relation to themselves—as much, in fact, as does the Vichy Government to-day) had been very active in the days of Doumergue, who continuously used them as a means of intimidation against Parliament. But Parliament called his bluff, and under M. Doumergue’s successor, M. Flandin (November 1934 to

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

May 1935), who at that time assumed the appearance of a good democratic premier—he constantly invoked the example of Waldeck-Rousseau!—the Fascist Leagues, though gaining in membership, were not much in evidence. The Croix de Feu, whose leader, Colonel de la Rocque, had developed this select ex-servicemen's organization into a League, now claimed a membership of about two millions. La Rocque's popularity reached its peak in the second half of 1935, under the premiership of M. Laval.

What exactly La Rocque's programme was would be hard to explain. It is outlined in *Service Public*, a book he published in 1935. This book, like La Rocque's articles and speeches, is woolly-headed; many of its passages are nothing but high-falutin' verbiage verging on gibberish; but its two outstanding *motifs*—for they can hardly be called ideas—are "corporatism" and "the family." The conception of the "family" as an electoral and civic unit, was opposed to that of the "citizen." The "corporatist" *motif* was inspired by the example of Italy, though, otherwise, the Croix de Feu denied being Fascists. They did not, however, conceal their glowing admiration for Mussolini. Their "corporatism" and their "family" vote idea, however, implied a drastic revision of France's republican constitution; and both ideas have been adopted by the constitutional and trade union reformers of Vichy. The courtship of the peasantry, "the backbone of France," and of the small bourgeoisie as opposed to the "Communist" working class was also apparent in the Croix de Feu propaganda; though, like the Nazis before them, the

## EPILOGUE

Croix de Feu placed great store on the support they were supposed to be getting from a part of the working class. They set up trade union organizations of their own, in competition with the C.G.T.; and the very large number of advertisements in their weekly, *Le Flambeau*, was typical of the wide financial support they were getting from the employer class.

La Rocque, however, was a cautious man, and the more extremist movements, such as the Cagouards, and, to some extent, Doriot's *Parti Populaire Français*, were the outcome of the impatience existing among the more violent Croix de Feu men. The attempt made in 1937 by large sections of the Right to "sink" La Rocque, whom they accused of having been in the pay of the Tardieu and Laval Governments, was significant. At the back of it was a newspaper intrigue (the *Jour* and the *Action Française* were frightened lest La Rocque, who had taken over the *Petit Journal* should impinge unduly on their circulation among the Right wing—and predominantly Croix de Feu bourgeoisie); and Tardieu (against his better judgment) was dragged in as the chief denouncer of La Rocque. But there was more to it than that. La Rocque, though pro-Italian, had not fully accepted the conception of a "Fascist International," and was particularly distrustful of Germany. The rejoicing in the German Press over La Rocque's embarrassing answers to Tardieu's charges was significant.

Laval was in genuine sympathy with the Croix de Feu whom he privately declared to be the "finest element of France." It was also in 1935 that Laval

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

expressed his private belief that "parliament could function only in normal times." Laval, the ex-Socialist, was, indeed, a representative figure of the French bourgeoisie, perhaps the most fully representative figure, despite his plebeian origin, his Socialist past, and his lack of personal polish. He came into office in the summer of that year "to save the franc," after the Chamber's abortive revolt against the deflationist policy of the Bank of France. He was anti-parliamentarian at heart, and had a genuine affection for the Croix de Feu, whose demonstrations in the Champs-Élysées to the cry: *La France aux Français* he fully encouraged. (It was a "Vichy" slogan if ever there was one; though in 1940, God knows, it was not directed against the Germans who were occupying two-thirds of France.) Lastly, Laval already then pursued a policy of appeasement towards Italy and Germany, and had no faith whatsoever in the League of Nations or in collective security. He completely abandoned the policy of his predecessor Barthou, who with his "encirclement" policy was the last French statesman to have made a strong stand against Germany. But Laval thought Barthou an anachronism. In an earlier book<sup>1</sup> I described my meeting with Laval at the end of 1934. He led me up to a map of Europe, and pointing to Germany, he said: "Do you think we can ever have peace in Europe without coming to an agreement with *this*?" He worked hard for a *rapprochement* with Italy, with whom he signed the famous Rome agreements of January '35; later he took part in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Destiny of France.*

## EPILOGUE

Stresa conference which the French Right continued for years to treat as the acme of Franco-British diplomatic achievement, the happy effects of which, they said, would have lasted but for Mr. Eden.

Laval was the hero of the first great diplomatic conflict between England and France; and Laval, though never quite burning his bridges, either with Parliament or with England, took a decisively Italian line. No doubt, the behaviour of the British Government had been by no means perfect during the previous year, and the signing of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of June '35 showed a great disregard for the League of Nations whose principles Mr. Eden was now defending on Abyssinia's behalf. Recrimination against England was easy. Only what the partisans of collective security could not understand was why France should proceed to ignore the League precisely at a time when Great Britain had at last decided to support it wholeheartedly. But Laval was not interested in the League; nor was he particularly eager on the British alliance; he preferred instead to strive for a *rapprochement* with Italy and Germany. Though paying lip service to the League he did everything to render the sanctions ineffective. His hostility to England, though never openly expressed, was certainly real. He encouraged the violent anti-British Press campaign during the Abyssinian crisis—a campaign which found its most complete expression in Henri Béraud's famous article in *Guingoire* in October '35: "*Il faut réduire l'Angleterre en esclavage.*" "I hate England by instinct and by tradition," Béraud wrote. "I hate her in my own name and in the name



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of my ancestors. The day may come when the nations of Continental Europe will unite to overthrow the tyrant with his reputation for invincibility. Perhaps the day is near." And he added that "in France, only hotel porters and M. Flandin are pro-British." It was pure Vichy with a spoonful of vitriol added.

The sanctions experiment came to grief. Laval had sabotaged it from the outset, and after the British General Election, the British Conservatives, some of whom were in sympathy with Laval, decided not to persist. The result was the Hoare-Laval plan.

A puzzling episode in Laval's career during that eventful year was his signing of the mutual assistance pact with Russia. That was an internal operation; and Laval had surrounded the treaty with so many safeguard clauses that in practice it amounted to very little. "The value of the pact," a Soviet diplomat remarked at the time, "depends entirely on the extent to which the French choose to observe it"; and he obviously had no illusions about M. Laval. Only, the pact was a good piece of window-dressing for the benefit of his working-class voters at Aubervilliers. But at the back of his mind Laval knew that the agreement committed him to nothing; and he kept on postponing its ratification. By the time he resigned (January '36) it had not been ratified yet.

But it is no use blaming Laval entirely for the Abyssinian fiasco. The Socialists and the Radicals—particularly Herriot, though a member of the

## EPILOGUE

Laval Cabinet—were violently hostile to Laval, both owing to his anti-British policy, and owing to the patronage he was giving to the Croix de Feu. But at heart, neither the Radicals—who, after the fall of Sir Samuel Hoare, followed suit and broke up the Laval Cabinet—nor the Socialists were ready “to go the whole hog for the Negus.” At heart, they felt it was most regrettable that the League should be put to the test over so unfortunate a case as Abyssinia; and they really felt that the primary purpose of the League was to keep order in Europe—and to protect France against Germany. When Pierre Cot wanted to speak at the Radical Congress in Paris in October '35 in favour of military and naval sanctions against Italy, Herriot persuaded him to desist. Such a speech, he thought, “would be too unpopular in the country.”

Laval was turned out in January, 1936 by the Radicals, chiefly on the Abyssinian issue; but his successor at the Quai d'Orsay, M. Flandin, was just as pro-Italian as he. He wrecked Mr. Eden's last attempt to enforce the oil embargo on Italy; and when, a few days later, the Germans invaded the Rhineland, the British Government was in the worst possible mood to help the French. British opinion and the greater part of the British Government, of course, fully misunderstood the significance of the Hitler *coup*; but, as already said, the French Government and French opinion, were little better. The Germans were capturing not only France's first line of defence, but they were also paralysing her ability to intervene effectively in favour of her Eastern

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

allies. But the prevalent French reaction was, as already said: "If we don't budge now, it'll give us at least two years' peace"; and, another familiar argument was: "Well, even if they take our first line of defence, we have still got the Maginot Line left"; a statement which by implication already ignored France's obligations to her Eastern allies.

And then, for over two years (yes—just what the partisans of no-action in March, 1936 had said) France was (apart from the Spanish war) left in complete peace by Germany, which was making full use of these two years to build up her Rhineland defences, and her army, and her air force. France did not bother about the international situation. She preferred to stew in her own juice. For several months after the Rhineland *coup*, no interest was shown in foreign affairs at all. Everything was concentrated on home politics—on the May election which resulted in the great victory of the Front Populaire.

I need not recall here the story of the great Front Populaire movement in France. It was the direct outcome of the 6th of February riots. The workers of France and the lower middle class, and even the peasantry had been genuinely stirred by the "Fascist menace"; and whoever witnessed the first great Front Populaire demonstration in Paris on July 14th, 1935, and the apotheosis a year later (though, at that moment, it had already become predominantly Communist) cannot fail to have been impressed by the depth and genuineness of the movement. Charles Péguy once drew a famous dis-

## EPILOGUE

inction between *politique* and *mystique*; the latter being a policy with a spiritual and emotional inspiration. The anti-Fascism of the Front Populaire was not merely a policy; it was a genuine *mystique*. Later, however, like the Dreyfusard *mystique* of the past, (Péguy's favourite example) it degenerated into *politique*—and a *politique* conducted entirely by the Communists. Whatever the motives of Moscow in turning the Communist Party in France into a nationalist, patriotic, jacobin organization, the support this nationalism and jacobinism received from wide sections of French opinion was perfectly genuine. The Paris working class, in particular, felt strongly about Republican Spain. Only, by that time, a rift has already occurred in the Front Populaire lute.

The Radicals, egged on by Republican opinion in provincial France (particularly by the *instituteurs*) were at first, for the most part, favourably disposed towards the Front Populaire. But already in June, 1936—scarcely a month after the election—many of them became seriously alarmed by the extent of the stay-in strikes. The French working class, who had been very badly treated by the employers, enjoyed at first widespread popular support, despite the “illegality” of the stay-in method. The first waves of strikes had, indeed, all the qualities of a *mystique*. But as the strikes continued, Radical and even Socialist opinion became alarmed; while the upper *bourgeoisie* got into a genuine panic. The most violent criticisms against the weakness of the Blum Government in dealing with the “stay-in pest” came from that conservative body, the Senate, where

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

M. Caillaux denounced the Government and also ridiculed the Front Populaire programme, which he described as "Rooseveltism for Lilliput." There was a sound economic basis for his criticism; France was neither financially, nor internationally in a good position for starting on a vast economic experiment. Blum, at heart a reformist Socialist, was in an awkward position. He continued to give assurances of financial orthodoxy to the banks, but continued to be under the constant pressure of the C.G.T. and the dynamic working class.

The story of the Popular Front was one of startling achievements during the first month—when, under working-class pressure a number of important reforms (trade union rights, holidays with pay, and—unfortunately—also the 40-hour week) were passed by Parliament, and of a slow but sure decline after that. In February, 1937 M. Blum himself proclaimed the "pause" in the application of the Popular Front programme, and in March, hard pressed for money, and threatened with another devaluation of the franc (after the first one, in October) he consented to the appointment of two nominees of the Bank of France to the head of the exchange equalization fund. These were M. Rist and M. Baudouin, a name later to become famous. Blum put himself in a position of complete dependence on the banks after that; and the deliberately spectacular resignation in July, 1937 of the two financial experts was the signal for another financial "panic," which, a few days later, led to the fall of the Blum Government.

## EPILOGUE

To foil the "bankers' ramp" Blum asked the Senate for plenary powers—including the power to introduce a camouflaged form of exchange control. He was defeated by the Senate. Baudouin was acting, on that occasion, as the defender of capitalism and financial orthodoxy. People who know him say that this financial role was irksome to him; for he had wider ambitions; and in the years that followed, he took an increasing interest in international affairs, and turned his business contacts with Italy to political advantage.

After the fall of the Blum Government, Popular Front Government No. 2 was formed; but in reality the Front Populaire, as an economic experiment, was dead. M. Chautemps, the new prospective Premier, called Bonnet back from Washington to make him Finance Minister. Bonnet was an orthodox financier, on good terms with "high finance." The Socialists remained in the Government to keep up the illusion that the Popular Front was still in existence. But Bonnet was, from within the Government, working very hard for its disruption.

In July, 1936, the Spanish war broke out. The reactionary and pro-Fascist elements in France, beaten at home, saw in it an opportunity to take their revenge. The blatant co-operation with the Fascist Powers of the French *bien pensants* in their "anti-Communist" frenzy (for the stay-in strikes had seriously scared them) dates from this moment. Under British pressure, but also under Radical pressure, Blum accepted non-intervention. But this act

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

of "appeasement" towards the French Right had no effect. France remained divided. The Communists agitated for direct help for the Spanish Republic; the Right were solidly pro-Franco, and all in favour of Italian intervention in Spain. The greater part of the Socialists and Radicals clung to non-intervention as a "lesser evil." The complete and utter disregard of France's national interests by the French Right and the *bien pensants* was denounced in a scathing attack on them by M. Georges Bernanos, the Catholic writer, in *Les Grands Cimetières sous la Lune*. The doctrines of Maurras, with all his blindness to France's national tradition, were admirably shown-up by Bernanos in his great polemical book.

At this time the *bien-pensants* might well have chosen as their slogan: "Fascists of the world unite." It went even farther. The Cagoulard movement, which made its first spectacular appearance in Paris on 9th September, 1937, when two houses were wrecked by bomb explosions in the Étoile district, was a strange flower of that funk and Fascism which found its clearest expression in the phrase "Hitler rather than the Front Populaire." Henri de Kerillis, who saw the full implications of the phrase, never ceased to dwell on it in his denunciations of the French *hitlériens*. The Cagoulard organization was largely composed of some wild men who had been driven underground by the dissolution in June 1936 of the Fascist leagues—the Croix de Feu, the Camelots du Roi, the Solidarité Française, etc. Panic-stricken *grands bourgeois* supported it financially: for they saw in it a promise of protection against Communism.

## EPILOGUE

The Cagoullards worked in close contact with German and especially Italian and Spanish agents; and Baron Aloisi was widely spoken of as their secret chief. The gruesome murder of Carlo Rosselli, the great anti-Fascist Italian journalist, and of his brother, was one of the first acts of the Cagoullards. The Étoile bomb outrages—an experiment in how public opinion could be thrown into a state of panic and bewilderment, particularly in the midst of some international crisis—were another; the Cerbère tunnel explosion and other bomb outrages, as well as the attempted capture at Brest of a Spanish Republican submarine were the work of the Cagoullards and Franco agents. Numerous arms dumps belonging to the C.S.A.R. (*Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire*—the official name of the Cagoullards) were found in Paris, particularly in the west end. General Duseigneur, and numerous French business men were more or less mixed up in the case; among them was M. Watteau, a close friend of General Duseigneur, and later a judge on the Supreme Court at Riom. It was whispered that General Weygand, noted for his sympathy for the 6th of February people, had contacts with the Cagoullards; but there is no direct evidence of this. The Cagoullard affair, which apart from a few arrests, was thoroughly hushed up by the Press and the legal authorities, was not perhaps very important in itself; but it was symptomatic; and so also was the sympathy the accused men received from a number of papers, notably the *Action Française*, the *Jour*, and *Gringoire*.



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

The Spanish war continued throughout 1937 and 1938. The Blum Government of March-April, 1938 probably saved the Spanish Republicans from immediate disaster by sending them a considerable amount of war material. But with the appointment of M. Bonnet to the Quai d'Orsay in April '38, this help to the Spanish Government soon stopped. True, the primary responsibility for this rests with Mr. Chamberlain; but Mr. Chamberlain's proposal was warmly seconded by M. Bonnet, despite M. Daladier's reluctance to "sell out" the Spanish Government to the Fascist powers. But Bonnet was anxious to come to terms with Italy; and sacrificed Republican Spain on the altar of Franco-Italian friendship. Besides, he was doing what all his Right-wing friends wanted him to do.

The first international crisis in 1938 that shook the world was Germany's invasion of Austria. It followed closely upon Mr. Chamberlain's proclamation of the appeasement and anti-League policy. Though upset by the Anschluss, France did not react to it. But the Anschluss, as well as Mr. Chamberlain's new "anti-League" policy, combined to strengthen the hands of the French to-hell-with-our-allies enthusiasts. The Flandin school of thought, openly expressed before the Anschluss by M. Flandin only, began to gain an immense number of adherents. All the people who had been against Republican Spain, now became openly anti-Czech, or at least anti-Benes. France was not going to fight for Benes, the Press said more and more openly. He must

## EPILOGUE

settle his differences with Hitler himself. The fear that France would be dragged by Czecho-Slovakia into a war against Germany was widespread and profound. In the view of the *bien-pensants*, England, thanks to Mr. Chamberlain, was this time on the side of the angels; and if he could fix up the quarrel between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia, regardless of what France had promised the Czechs, he would be a benefactor of humanity. The French *bien-pensants*, and Flandin, and the rest, were delighted with the appointment of the Runciman mission to Prague. It placed the responsibility of it all on England; and France could wash her hands of the whole thing. No doubt, some Frenchmen felt uneasy about Runciman; but they were only a minority—a minority who realized the fearful implications of what was being done. The story of how Czecho-Slovakia was sold out by France has been fully told; and though the initial responsibility for what happened rests with Mr. Chamberlain, the final responsibility certainly rests with the French. If Mr. Chamberlain gave everything away to Hitler, it is because he knew that the French were not prepared to go and fight. Later, no doubt, the French Army was mobilized; and, for a moment, public opinion was roused to a pitch of bellicose anger by Hitler's increasing arrogance; but when Munich came, it was accepted by the public with considerable relief—and with less shame than was felt in England. The "triumphal" entry into Paris of M. Daladier was a good symbol of French incomprehension of the international realities. It is said that when, from

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

the War Office window, Daladier looked down on the cheering crowds, he growled angrily: "*Ah, les c—s!*"

But could the French public be severely blamed for its incomprehension? For months, the French Press, working in conjunction with German propagandists, had been telling them that Czecho-Slovakia was not worth fighting for. The fact that the Czechs were allied to the Soviet, and were being defended by the *Humanité* at home were a sufficient reason, from the *bien-pensant* point of view, for letting them down. For anti-Bolshevism was in great vogue.

After Munich the anti-Red crusade became the real aim of men like Bonnet both at home and abroad. Flandin was preaching "retrenchment" behind the Maginot Line; Bonnet was fraternizing with Ribbentrop with whom he elaborated the famous Franco-German declaration of 6th December; the Press was "discouraged" against any anti-German utterances, even at the time of the great pogroms. Bonnet promised Ribbentrop what was virtually a free hand in the East; the *Comité France-Allemagne*, with Fernand de Brinon, Bonnet's *homme de confiance*, and Abetz, the chief Nazi agent in Paris, as its leading personages, was a centre of political activity; Mr. Percy Philip was *persona grata* with Bonnet, while Mr. Thomas Cadett, the Paris correspondent of *The Times*, and the present writer had the threat of expulsion from France suspended over them.

This pre-Vichy atmosphere in the days of the Ribbentrop visit, when France already seemed to

## EPILOGUE

have accepted the status of Germany's vassal, with a *gleichgeschaltet* Press, anti-Red and anti-semitic campaigns and what-not, was dispelled by M. Daladier who suddenly reacted with astonishing vigour against the Italian outcry for "Tunis, Corsica, Nice." Daladier was not devoid of healthy national reflexes; and the Italian demonstration, two months after Munich and peace-in-our-time, infuriated him. He went to Corsica and Tunis and yelled his head off against Mussolini. In Paris, Bonnet, shaking with annoyance, spent his time expurgating Daladier's speeches for the Press. During those first months of 1939 Daladier's popularity increased. He had by this time finally demolished the Popular Front, and had discredited the Communists by effectively breaking the General Strike they had tried to engineer on 30th November, 1938; and this had made him acceptable to the bourgeoisie. His North African tour was popular; because it avenged, to some extent, the humiliation of Munich. The illusions of Munich were rapidly dwindling; and on 15th March the greater part of France realized that the policy of appeasement had broken down. Nevertheless Bonnet continued to send secret emissaries to Berlin and Rome. M. de Brinon went to Berlin and met Ribbentrop, with whom he talked without the knowledge of the regular ambassador, M. Coulondre. When the latter heard of it he nearly resigned. M. Baudouin, who often went to Rome, was believed to go there with secret messages from Bonnet. Bonnet, in effect, begged the Italians not to take Daladier too seriously.

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

Daladier was full of foreboding. So were the French people; and in this hour of anxiety, they accepted the man who felt as they did. He had "saved peace" at Munich; and they felt grateful to him for it. He had also expressed their anger when he defied Mussolini in his speeches at Ajaccio and Tunis. Among the numerous letters he received from rural France, there were many which said: "We do not want war, but we trust you; and if you tell us we must go to war, we shall go." Daladier, in a large measure, embodied the average Frenchman: the Frenchman who was fed-up with Hitler's arrogance and Mussolini's provocations, who was sick of the daily uncertainty and business depression caused by the "war of nerves," and of the partial mobilizations to which he had to submit every six months. *Il faut en finir*, was a fair summing up of what the average Frenchman felt between January, or at any rate, March 1939 and September. The French were fed-up. Only is fed-upness the best possible incentive to war?

After Czecho-Slovakia, Poland. No sooner had Czecho-Slovakia been swallowed up than Hitler started his diplomatic and Press campaign against Poland. Mr. Chamberlain, who also was "fed-up," gave Poland Britain's guarantee to come into the war on her side if she were attacked. The guarantee caused uneasiness at the Chamber of Deputies. People in the lobbies were scared. Bonnet was scared. M. Pierre Bressy, his *chef de cabinet*, had said on the day the Germans marched into Prague: "*Ca*

## EPILOGUE

*vous étonne? C'était dans la nature des choses.*" Just like that. Daladier, however, seconded Mr. Chamberlain. The French people, feeling fatalistic and fed-up, did not protest. True, some more attempts were made at appeasement. Bonnet's paper *L'Homme Libre* suggested that France should stay out of war unless England introduced conscription at once; and M. Déat, in the *Œuvre*, wrote his famous article, *Mourir pour Danzig?* which annoyed Daladier. He was also annoyed by Percy Philip, who gave for the B.B.C. a broadcast on similar lines.

At last England introduced conscription; and that had a good effect on the French. They felt more confident; even though the Bonnet papers continued to insinuate that it was really quite inadequate.

Since the guarantee had been given to Poland, it was necessary to supplement it, if possible, with a Russian alliance. It was late—very late. The Russians distrusted Mr. Chamberlain and M. Bonnet. Daladier was all in favour of the alliance, and accused Mr. Chamberlain of unnecessary haggling: "*il marchande comme un épicier*," he once angrily remarked. Actually, the responsibility for the breakdown of the talks is divided; and the Russians are much more to blame than the Allies. But that is another story.

France was actively preparing for war. Daladier, who had felt very pessimistic since January, took upon himself the task of preparing France for it, both materially and psychologically. After the invasion of Czecho-Slovakia in March, he obtained plenary

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

powers from Parliament, which he treated, on that occasion, with remarkable rudeness and disdain. Already after the General Strike, he had abolished the 40-hour week, and had, as he said, "turned France into a gigantic workshop." The stock of the Communists had fallen very low; what remained of the C.G.T. was in open revolt against the Communists who had got it landed in the strike fiasco; and Daladier, assuming dictatorial airs, was behaving toughly to everybody. He told the Chamber he would not suffer any criticism, and claimed that his fan mail expressed more truthfully to him the feelings of the country than any heckling in Parliament.

In a sense, he was right. France, especially peasant France, wanted to see a strong hand at the helm; and it had faith in Daladier with his hard, harsh peasant manner. He could afford to be rude to the Chamber. Daladier flattered the peasantry; more than once he treated them as class-one citizens who provided the Army with the greater part of its recruits. He elaborated a "Family Code." The Daladier regime had its poet-laureate in Jean Giraudoux, who in his book, with the significant title *Pleins Pouvoirs*, published in July, 1939, gave coherent expression to Daladier's revivalism. Like Daladier, he felt bitterly that "*le Français se fait rare*," and he advocated the creation of a more orderly, more coherent French culture, with spectacular monuments, a lot of children, and rather fewer *métèques*. There was a streak of Vichy-ism in the book, as there was in Daladier. But Family Code or no Family Code, Daladier really knew that he was building on sand. He saw

## EPILOGUE

the war coming, and knew that the Family Code, with its cash premiums on every new French baby, would not be properly applied until after victory.

This revivalist mood coincided with an unusual vogue, among the younger people of the educated class, of the writings of Charles Péguy. Why Péguy? Why this religious approach to France, why this French messianism? Why this sudden discovery of France's Christian and civilizing mission? Was it not a healthy reaction against the degenerate "nationalism" of Charles Maurras, whose "*nationalisme intégral*" had joined the Fascist international and had supported Munich? The *Nouvelle Revue Française*, *Esprit*, *Politique*, and other monthlies were packed with references to Péguy, and quotations from Péguy. If France had any spiritual and ideological guidance of a positive kind in 1939, and not merely the negative "*il faut en finir*," it came from Péguy. Only—the appeal was heard, after all, by only a part of the educated class. It never reached the ears of the ordinary soldier, or of the general public. The writings and the strange destiny of the fiery French crusader against the German beast, of the man who was killed by a German bullet on the Marne in September, 1914, were unknown to the ordinary Frenchman.

Otherwise, the war had no great positive basis. The recruits went off to the Maginot Line in the last days of August and the first days of September, with a feeling of anger against Hitler, but with a heavy heart. I was in Scotland at that time. I got a letter from a French peasant woman, who had watched the



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

troops drive past in their lorries towards Orléans. "*Le cœur serré, je les ai vus partir.*" It was everywhere like that. To France the war was a tragedy, a universal, general tragedy—but above all, a tragedy for every man, woman and child. Five million men were said to have been called up—practically every man from 20 to 49. There was a grim acceptance of the war; but there was no enthusiasm. *Il faut en finir*, so as to have peace later on. But an ideological basis, or even a sentimental basis? No. It was just "*quel malheur, quel malheur,*" as my peasant woman wrote. The political parties, as *Politique* remarked in its December number, revealed their complete ideological bankruptcy on that occasion. Even the argument that the existence of France was at stake was not presented with sufficient conviction. And then there was all that trouble with the Communists. The Russo-German pact had a devastating effect on the French working-class, the only class which, until then, had been powerfully, violently anti-Hitler. The Daladier Government dealt with the whole matter with a great lack of tact and discrimination. Not only were the Communist leaders thrown into prison—apart from those who escaped abroad—but the Government started a large-scale persecution of local party and trade union officials. The war was unpopular with the *bien-pensants*; but the persecution of the Communists was an extremely popular pastime. Daladier, who himself was rabidly anti-Communist, kept the Right appeased in this manner. The effect was bad. Had the Communist leaders been given enough freedom to defend Stalin, they might

## EPILOGUE

have made themselves very unpopular with the workers, who would have swung round in favour of the war. But all this persecution aroused in them feelings of party loyalty; and their attitude to the war became increasingly morose and sceptical. Thus the anti-Nazi working class, which might conceivably have remained anti-Nazi, in spite of the Stalin-Hitler pact, became pacifist.

The soldiers, in the meantime, were getting bored. They sat in their casemates on the Maginot Line; they were billeted in out-of-the-way Lorraine villages. True, during the first few weeks, there was some activity on the Maginot Line; the Germans were compelled to evacuate Saarbrücken; but after the evacuation by the French of the Warndt Forest, the phoney war became really phoney. Some 30,000 men on the Maginot Line were engaged in patrol activity; and that was about all. The spirit among the troops varied considerably. Some continued to be full of fight; others thought it all a deadly waste of time. On the whole, however, the spirit was not bad. There was a true *jacobin* atmosphere in many parts of the army; there was much open discussion among the soldiers—much more open than in the rear; and a genuine spirit of camaraderie among all the ranks. Men who came back from the Front thought that one of the effects of the “phoney” war was to create something of a gulf between the Army and the rear; between the men who would go on living indefinitely an abnormal life, and those living a normal life; and they prophesied that after the war France would be re-created by the soldiers. How long could they

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

endure the "phoney" war? Some said a year; others eighteen months; after that the Germans would have to be provoked into attacking. There was, of course, much dissatisfaction of a private kind. The soldiers were paid only 75 centimes a day; and the German propagandists would bellow about the British privates who were getting 17 francs. In Paris, soldiers would use up their ten days' leave driving taxicabs or acting as office messengers in order to make a little money for themselves and their wives. Soldiers' families were poorly paid. A woman and two children, though living rent free, received only 16 francs a day in the provinces and 21 francs in Paris. There was some haggling on whether, in taking work, a soldier's wife forfeited her military family allowance.

What were the politicians' reactions to the war? There were some who still tried to stop it. On 2nd September the Chamber voted the declaration of war on Germany only by implication; it was when it agreed unanimously to the opening of military credits amounting to 500 milliards. A few, notably M. Bergery, seemed very restive; but they were not given a chance to speak. Only, behind the scenes, some anti-war agitation still continued. The most notable example of this was the attempt made by Bonnet, the Foreign Minister, to stop the British Government from declaring war the next day. He had been in constant communication with Ciano, and the Italian Government were proposing another "Munich" on 5th September. Poland had already been invaded; and, unlike the British Government,

## EPILOGUE

Bonnet was willing to go to the conference without a German withdrawal from Polish territory. The tension between London and Paris became so acute that day that, after war was declared, Daladier was obliged to remove Bonnet from the Quai d'Orsay. He, however, kept him in his Cabinet as Minister of Justice. Bonnet's behaviour on that Saturday greatly embarrassed Mr. Chamberlain, who was made to face a storm in the House of Commons.

Daladier had a variety of people in his Cabinet—some of them more or less sharing Bonnet's ideas—notably de Monzie and Pomaret. Outside the Cabinet the opposition to the war was more outspoken. After the conquest of Poland, Flandin said to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber: "Is it really worth going on with?"

The two men in the Cabinet who took the war most seriously were Reynaud, the Finance Minister, and Mandel, the Minister of Colonies, who was working night and day to increase the war contribution of the colonies, both in manpower and in food and raw materials. Reynaud's two speeches in November and December at the Chamber and Senate, as well as his later broadcasts, were remarkable. He warned France that if the war was to be won, it *must* be a long one; and that she must face enormous sacrifices. He warned her against easy optimism. He advocated severe rationing in France, too. But other men in the Cabinet preferred to take an easier line. M. Queuille, the Minister of Agriculture, reflecting the views of rural France, was opposed to large-

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

scale rationing; and no really important rationing measures were ever introduced. And, in contrast with Reynaud, de Monzie said: "This war *must be short*."

Daladier was War Minister; he had been War Minister for nearly four years; and had also held the post before that. He talked with great confidence of military problems, and seemed to have the greatest faith in the Maginot Line. He assumed that the war would be a long one; and that Germany would, in the end, be worn out by the blockade, or would smash her head against the Maginot Line. In December he declared with great satisfaction: "*La France n'a pas été envahie*"; and he recalled that while in the corresponding period in the last war France had lost 415,000 men, she had now lost 1,600. He added that the northern extension of the Maginot Line was reliable; and was being worked on all the time. "*Nous sommes avares du sang français*," he said, amid a storm of applause from the deputies, each of whom was thinking of his own constituents, to whom he could repeat the magic phrase. It was pathetic and understandable from a human point of view; but the trouble was that the conception of the "bloodless war" became deeply engrained in the minds of many Frenchmen; and when the *blitzkrieg* came, they were psychologically unprepared for it. Even with poorer equipment, the French Army would have put up a better show in September, 1939 than it did in May and June, 1940.

While all was quiet on the Western Front, war broke out in Finland. The French "pacifists" who had been lying low during the early stages of the

## EPILOGUE

war in the West, and who even paid lip-service to the anti-Hitler cause, now saw their chance. The invasion of Poland by Russia was bad enough; but the attack on Finland was intolerable. The *Temps*, the *Matin*, the *Action Française* and several other papers proclaimed that the *équivoque* ought to be put an end to; it was senseless to fight Germany and yet to maintain diplomatic relations with Russia. War on Russia, the *Temps* argued, would provide the Allies with a great many strategic opportunities they were now lacking. An attack on Baku was almost openly discussed. There was, behind all this, an attempt to patch up a peace with Germany, and to turn the guns—possibly German and Allied mixed—against the Soviets. There were many who, without being keen on fighting Germany, were eager to fight Russia. Catholic peasant recruits from Brittany and Normandy were said to be anxious to be sent to Finland to fight the Bolsheviks. The failure of the Government to help Finland aroused the fury of the Right-wing Deputies; and the Daladier Government was virtually defeated, and resigned.

It is true that the anger did not last long; and the Radicals, in particular, deeply regretted the fall of Daladier when they saw who had succeeded him. The Right felt equally bad about it. Instead of Daladier, Reynaud—"England's man"—was now at the head of the Government. A number of "doubtful" people, such as Bonnet, had been cleared out of the Cabinet; instead, Reynaud gave three Cabinet posts and three under-secretaryships to the Socialist Party. The reception given by the Chamber to this

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

war-to-the-bitter-end Cabinet was anything but encouraging. The Right, howling their heads off in a true 6th of February spirit, charged Reynaud with having plotted with Blum against Daladier. The votes cast for this Government were only two above the aggregate number of hostile votes and abstentions; and it was even whispered that Herriot, the Speaker, had made a mistake, and that in reality Reynaud had been defeated.

Daladier was still War Minister; but his attitude to the new Premier remained ambiguous. The first day the new Cabinet appeared before the Chamber, Daladier was not present at all; his absence was like a cue to many Radicals to vote against the new Government—which indeed, they did, with Bonnet as the leader of the anti-Reynaud drive among the Radicals.

Daladier continued to be in a bad humour. When Reynaud went to London for his first Supreme War Council, Daladier refused to accompany him. It was on that occasion that Reynaud signed the French pledge not to make a separate peace with Germany. Oddly enough, Daladier had always refrained from giving such a pledge to England. Emile Buré recently expressed the view that Daladier had, at heart, continued to hope right through the "phoney war" for a patched-up peace with Germany. That is not certain. The impression one had of Daladier during the early months of 1940 was that he did not know what to do. He was, especially after his riding accident in January, in a morose kind of state, and very irritable, bad-tempered and almost inaccessible—an

## EPILOGUE

additional reason, by the way, why he was so unpopular with the deputies, who love to hobnob with Cabinet Ministers.

During the first weeks of its existence, the position of the Reynaud Government was extremely shaky. It—or rather its Socialist members—were violently attacked in papers like *Guingoire*; and about a fortnight after its formation, I met Marcel Déat at the Chamber of Deputies who announced that he was going to interpellate the Government, and that the chances of overthrowing it were considerable. Déat thought that at least 30 of the Socialists—those in sympathy with Paul Faure's pacifism—would vote against the Government. It is well known that the visit of Mr. Sumner Wells to Europe raised high hopes among the French pacifists—Paul Faure, Déat, Flandin, Laval, Bonnet and others. M. Paul Faure in his paper, *Pays Socialiste*, wrote an article, entitled *J'ai fait un rêve insensé*, in which he advocated, in effect, an economic round-table conference at which Daladier, Chamberlain, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini and the rest would discuss the economic reconstruction of Europe. For Paul Faure thought of the war in purely economic terms. His argument was that all the differences which had resulted in the war could be amicably settled by economic discussion. The part he gave England in his economic scheme was not clearly defined; like Brunet, one of his followers, he thought of the economic reconstruction of Europe chiefly in *continental* terms. Paul Faure was to become one of the principal supporters on the Left of the Pétain armistice. It was even announced at



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

first that he had entered the Pétain Government as Minister of Labour. Paul Faure has always been something of a defeatist. This great Socialist—whose love affairs had, at one time, filled the gossip columns of *Gringoire* and *Candide*—lacked confidence in an extraordinary degree. I remember lunching with him in 1935, at the time of La Rocque's greatest vogue. Paul Faure was very nervous, and thought a successful Fascist *coup* by the Croix de Feu highly probable. His faith in the Republic then was no greater than his faith in France five years later.

But that by the way. What saved the *belliciste* Reynaud Government was the war in Norway. With a certain lack of responsibility and perspective Reynaud made tremendous political capital for himself out of the first naval battle of Narvik, when seven German destroyers were sunk in one day; and drew both before the Chamber and the Senate, an overwhelmingly optimistic picture of the progress of the Allies in Norway. Narvik, Narvik, Narvik—for a fortnight nobody talked of anything but that. And then, towards the end of April, the reaction set in. The evacuation of Andalsnes did not look so pretty; and when, in the second week in May the disaster of Norway had become only too apparent, and when the resignation of Mr. Chamberlain became a matter of hours, the position of the Reynaud Government was also severely shaken. For a moment it seemed that Reynaud would be even more badly shaken than Chamberlain; which prompted a Labour M.P. to remark that Norway might lead "to the survival of a

## EPILOGUE

bad British Government and the fall of a good French Government."

But actually, this prophecy proved incorrect. Mr. Churchill succeeded Mr. Chamberlain; but M. Reynaud remained in office. Not without a great deal of trouble, though. The fall of Mr. Chamberlain would automatically have been followed by the fall of M. Reynaud, but for the invasion of Holland and Belgium. On the day this happened, Daladier's plans for revenge had ripened; and he would have succeeded Reynaud had not the latter succeeded in persuading M. Marin and M. Ybarnégaray to enter his Cabinet. The entry of these two leaders of the Right into the Government strengthened Reynaud's position; for the Government now assumed the appearance of a real National Government stretching from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. Marin, the old Lorrainer, certainly entered the Reynaud Government in a purely disinterested patriotic spirit. What were the motives of M. Ybarnégaray in entering it is more doubtful. His past record suggested that he was a sincere patriot—an impression which was scarcely altered by the prominent role he played in the Croix de Feu movement, and even by his close association during the Spanish civil war and after, with General Franco. And yet, Ybarnégaray's conduct during the weeks that followed, and especially before and after the signing of the Armistice makes one wonder whether he entered the Reynaud Government on 10th May in a purely patriotic spirit, and without any ulterior motives.

The period in the story of France's fall I have now

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

reached is the period covered by the Diary; and I do not know if there is very much to add to what it tells, in its disjointed, but "close-up" way, of the evolution of events during the tragic weeks between the 10th of May and the 18th of June. I shall, therefore, without dwelling on this period try to explain that crystallization process which resulted in France's surrender.

## II

### VICHY

After all, what is there to say in addition to what I already said in the Diary? There is the purely military story; but I am not a military expert; and to the layman in Paris only the following points were clear:

(1) In the Low Countries, the Allies were overwhelmed by the force of the German onslaught and the novelty of the German technique;

(2) the lessons of the campaign in Poland, which was a first application of these principles, had been ignored and neglected on the easy assumption that the Poles are Poles and the French are French. Actually, everything tends to show that as an individual soldier the Pole was greatly superior to the Frenchman;

(3) While there were some remarkable cases of French resistance—notably at Rethel and at a few other more or less isolated points during the great German drive from the Meuse to the Channel Ports and also at Dunkirk, and a week later on the Somme, the general level of French morale was considerably lower than in 1914, when Germany at first also enjoyed an indisputable superiority in equipment;

(4) both the morale and the efficiency of the French officers were, again, unequal to 1914-18; and human

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

life, generally, was prized too highly both by the French command ("*avares du sang français*") and by many of the individuals directly concerned. I am merely stating a moral factor in France's collapse; I am not, as a civilian, presuming to criticize men each of whom faced far greater dangers and hardships than any of us civilians ever did; but the fact remains that, in many cases, the old spirit of Verdun was lacking. And the same is true of the women. They wept too much from the very day the Germans invaded Holland and Belgium.

(5) Was there "Fifth Column" activity in the Army? There is no doubt that the Germans had numerous agents; and that bogus telephone calls, for instance, played a certain part in the disorganization of the French. But whether there were many officers and men who were consciously handing their country over to Germany is something about which I have no evidence; and I doubt whether plain treason played any great part in the German advance. But discouragement and—in the later stages of the war—the belief that the struggle was hopeless, and that if France was to survive, she must "accommodate" herself to her defeat were important factors, which largely account for the subsequent attitude at Bordeaux of men like Pétain and Weygand.

(6) Lastly, it is clear that the real trouble, psychological and material, arose from the sudden collapse of the "Maginot" system on which the whole organization of the French Army had been based, and which every French—and British—citizen had been taught to trust implicitly. The French had had the

## EPILOGUE

miracle of the Maginot Line drummed into them for years; perhaps it was lucky, from the point of view of morale, that the British soldier had heard of Maginot only a few months earlier, and also knew from direct experience that when he arrived in the north of France earlier in the war, there was really nothing in the way of fortifications worth writing home about. The fortifications built by the British between the Channel, and, roughly, Hazebrouck, were in fact, never attacked, but turned. The Germans broke through the French sector of the "extension"; and this had been the subject of the most deplorable and irresponsible optimism.

The decision not to defend Paris has often been criticized. I have no opinion on the question whether a successful defence of Paris was militarily possible; what evidence there is suggests that it was not. But there was the same psychological element in the decision not to defend Paris as in the formula "*avares du sang français.*" Even a conquered France was better than a physically annihilated France; France might, in time, emancipate herself if her people were allowed to live on and rear children; and Paris might still be Paris provided it was not razed to the ground. To put it a little crudely: the old slogan of the Jacobins: "*Liberté ou la mort*" had been abandoned for "*Esclavage—plus ou moins provisoire—plutôt que la mort,*" on the ground that what was most important to save, if anything could yet be saved, were the seeds of national, or rather, racial survival. In all this, there was a vague conception of "regeneration through

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

suffering" and there was the strangely Chinese-like belief that "France could not be destroyed." There was also a tendency to take a very long, and very philosophical view of the whole thing: the French, as men of a higher civilization, would eventually absorb and convert the German conquerors; and pleasant parallels from history — how the Franks were civilized by the Gallo-Romans and how in the fourteenth century the Kingdom of France was reduced to a tiny bit of country round Paris — appealed to many minds in these moments of distress. Already for a few years — particularly after Munich — writers like M. Detoef had liked to play about with such ideas of the inevitable regeneration of France through conquest and humiliation. Others, like Marcel Déat, went a lot further, and were, in effect, prepared to make the best of a bad situation by accepting wholeheartedly the New Order of Hitler and Mussolini, and by begging the supermen for a little place — oh, quite a little place — in the new scheme of things.

The motives that prompted the Bordeaux Government to surrender to Germany are, in fact, numerous and very mixed. The motif of expiation and renovation through suffering was present in some minds — and this perhaps was the most respectable of the motives. Others were prompted, either by cowardice or by what they believed to be their self-interest to bow to the German demands, in the hope that the Germans would allow these people to become, as it were, the ruling caste in France — a caste which could now wreak vengeance on its political opponents. On the

## EPILOGUE

soil of defeat and disaster the seeds of Vichy had rapidly developed into a great monstrous flower. Here was something of all the things that one had already seen sprouting, especially since 1934. The 6th of February spirit; the anti-liberal and anti-parliamentary spirit, which was not merely critical of the abuses of the French parliamentary system, but absolutely hostile to the parliamentary, democratic idea; the cultivation of the peasantry—that good French peasantry which had already supported Napoleon III through thick and thin—as against the turbulent industrial proletariat; the shouts of *La France aux Français* which had in the heyday of the Croix de Feu and Jeunesses Patriotes and Solidarité Française resounded up and down the Champs Elysées; the Nazi-inspired anti-semitism of *Gringoire* and *Je Suis Partout*; and the more authentically French anti-semitism of the *Action Française*; the anti-Freemasonry of the old Stavisky days; and, above all, the anti-British explosions of *Gringoire* and the anti-British sentiments of many of the ordinary people, and also of the Lavals, the Bonnets, the Déats, the Paul Faures.

It was all there; the feeling that the British were selfish imperialists, who were ready to fight to the last French soldier; that the British had ruined Franco-Italian friendship; that the British had not sent enough troops and had let the French down. And even as late as the 16th and 17th of June, the men of Bordeaux were still full of pernicious illusions about Italy and Spain; even though Italy had declared war on France, and General Franco had converted his



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

neutrality into non-belligerency. The Latin *bloc*—the *bloc* of the Latin Nations, which would, in the long run, offset and cancel out Germany's hegemony on the Continent—this Latin *bloc* was still a favourite idea with Laval and Baudouin, and the aged Marshal Pétain. Daladier had sent him to Spain as French Ambassador in March, 1939; he had allowed himself to be flattered and blackmailed by the Spaniards, and was ultimately persuaded by them that Hitler would offer him, the "hero of Verdun," an honourable soldier's peace.

Was it possible for France to continue the war after the fall of Paris? The answer is yes; provided France was in a truly heroic mood. It would have meant grim sacrifices and fearful risks. In Weygand's view there was no line in European France which could be held successfully for any length of time. All the great industrial centres had fallen, or were about to fall, into the hands of the Germans. The only chance was to continue the war in North Africa. What did that mean? It meant first, that European France would be left entirely in the hands of Germany; and what fearful blackmail could the Germans not exercise on the Government of North Africa and the soldiers and sailors there? Anything from the massacre of the two million war prisoners to the massacre of the entire French population. Was such German blackmail—though perfectly compatible with the Nazi character—ever attempted? I do not know; but it is characteristic that stories of such blackmail should have been current *at Bordeaux*

## EPILOGUE

during the few days that preceded the armistice. The continuation of the war in North Africa would have been perfectly feasible; but it meant two things, both of which were distasteful to the men around Pétain; *it would have meant the perpetuation of the alliance with "democratic" England, and it would have meant that the war would be primarily fought against Italy.* And even the idea of a *revanche* on Germany *through the (relatively easy) defeat of Mussolini's Italy* was intolerable to the Lavals, the Pétains, the Ybarnégarays, the Baudouins, the De Monzies, and the rest who had, for years, been longing for Italy's friendship, and had been daydreaming of the Latin *bloc*. Their political ideal was precisely Mussolini's Italy. These pernicious illusions were encouraged by the astonishingly mild armistice terms presented by the "victorious" Italians to France, and, later, by the lack of haste they showed in enforcing them.

There was a variety of motives behind the French decision to surrender. But whatever the different motives, all the men round Pétain shared, more or less, in the illusion that by surrendering to Hitler and by being polite and humble to Italy, they could build up a France of their own; that authoritarian *bien-pensant* capitalist and small-freeholder France in which they would rule under the more or less benevolent glance of Hitler and Mussolini. This France, they thought, would be anti-Liberal, anti-British, but (unlike Germany) not necessarily anti-capitalist, or non-capitalist. It would be the France of *la France aux Français*. The grim and ugly paradox of the whole thing was that the slogan *La*

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

*France aux Français* became the more or less official slogan of the French Government on the day when two-thirds of France's territory were under German occupation; and that this slogan, *La France aux Français* was essentially one symbolizing the attempted fraternization of France with the Nazi conquerors! Equally grim is the thought that the "National Revolution" should have triumphed on the very day when France had departed from her true national tradition further than she had departed from it in a thousand years.

It is still too early to attempt to write even a brief story of "Pétain" France. What has happened so far is sordid, ugly, grotesque, and yet, in many ways, sad and pathetic. The Constitution of 1875 was abolished, and with it, the older slogan of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. Some of the noblest things France had contributed to European civilization were being gleefully and almost savagely discarded. Instead, the *Führer* principle was being adopted, and embodied in the 85-year-old Marshal Pétain. To appeal to French sentiment, the Marshal was going to take up his residence at Versailles—if the Germans would allow him to do so. Shades of Louis Quatorze! But the Nazis, who had their own ideas about Versailles and Paris, preferred him to stay at Vichy, the home of decrepit invalids. The Chamber was abolished and the Senate was abolished, to be replaced by rubber stamp bodies to be constituted in accordance with *Führer* Pétain's wishes. The *départements* were abolished and replaced by the *ancien-régime* provinces; a sentimental idea with which La Rocque had played,

## EPILOGUE

nobody quite knows why. Already in 1935 I saw a map of France divided into provinces hanging in La Rocque's office in Paris. Irresponsible nonsense was written in the Vichy Press about decentralization, and, at the same time about the great example of Richelieu—as though Richelieu, the maker of the French State, had been a decentralizationist! The split-up of France into provinces only played into the hands of the Germans, who promptly took up the fantastic idea of an “independent Brittany,” an independent state of Flanders—not to mention Alsace-Lorraine which was already virtually annexed, even before any peace treaty.

Everything in France ultimately depends on the outcome of the life-and-death struggle between Germany and Great Britain. The state of affairs in France in the months that followed the Armistice was certainly abnormal and, in every respect, provisional. The Vichy Government attempted, very unconvincingly, to persuade the stunned and bewildered French people that a “National Revolution” was in progress in France. What “National Revolution” was possible, with two-thirds of the country, including the entire Atlantic coast, occupied by Germany? Ten million local inhabitants and about eight million refugees were now herded into “Pétain” France—a country producing most of the wine, but scarcely 15 per cent of France's food. What were they to live on? What work was there for them? Those who signed the Armistice foolishly imagined that France would rapidly “return to normal.” Before long the Germans made it very clear that this was a naive

illusion. In the rich, occupied parts of France—in Normandy, Brittany, the Beauce, the Vexin, the Yonne, and all the other grain and meat and sugar and dairy regions—the Germans bought up with doubtful notes all they could lay their hands on. This food, a large part of which normally went to Southern France, in exchange for the wine of the Midi, now went to Germany. Already in the middle of July the *Temps* complained of the “great wall of China” the Germans had set up to separate occupied France from unoccupied France. There was scarcely any traffic between the two, and scarcely any trade. Refugees had great trouble in returning to their homes. Lucien Romier in the *Figaro* and even the pro-Fascist Fernand Laurent in the *Jour* admitted that Pétain France was completely at Germany’s mercy. “Everything depends on what the Armistice Commission at Wiesbaden decides,” M. Fernand-Laurent wrote. “So long as Article 17 of the Armistice continues to be rigorously enforced, that is, so long as no food and other commodities can be brought from the occupied zone to the unoccupied zone, there can be no return to normal.”

Laval begged the Germans to allow the French Government to settle in Paris; all in vain. To add insult to injury, the Germans appointed Abetz virtual Ambassador to France and *Gauleiter* of Paris—the chief spy who had been ignominiously thrown out of France two months before the war. He had been a great friend of Bonnet and Mme Bonnet; but that did not make him any friendlier to the Vichy Government now. On the contrary, his behaviour

## EPILOGUE

to Laval was thoroughly insulting; and the Germans suspended over the Vichy Government the constant threat of a "rival" government in Paris. Already the local German-controlled Press was, with the help of men like Doriot, carrying on Nazi propaganda, particularly among the bewildered French working class; National-Socialist propaganda, with the emphasis on the second word. The Vichy Government were accused of being rusty reactionaries, representing nobody, and as a set of crooked politicians in league with capitalism, and "with mysterious threads stretching out to England." No doubt, the ineffable Alphonse de Chateaubriand who, already in the days of Munich, slobbered over the great human *bonté* of Adolf Hitler wrote in the Paris Press that the Axis doctrine was France's only salvation; while at Vichy, Marcel Déat was preaching the wholehearted adherence of France to the New Order. And another person—a M. Coutrot—in the *Œuvre* even went so far as to write that "June, 1940 was a great victory for both Germany and France; the two peoples, abandoning their national enmities, can now live and work together for a happy future." And M. Ybarnégaray, the Minister of Youth and Family set up labour camps where the youth of France would live and work "*dans la joie et dans la santé.*" Only none of this impressed either the Germans, or the ordinary people of France. The *National Zeitung* of Goering said that while a few Frenchmen sincerely wanted an understanding with the Führer, the French people had not realized yet that the Armistice was not peace and that "penance must yet be done."

## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

It also opposed to the cringing of the writers in the *Œuvre* the arrogant theory of the *Herrenvolk*; and added that this theory was diametrically opposed to the French 1789 theory of equality among men, nations and races. As for the Vichy clamour for a "return to normal," the clearest answer was given by the *Berliner Börsenzeitung*, which suggested that Southern France was an underpopulated country; that most of the refugees would do much better to stay where they were; and leave the rich North and West of France to German colonization.

The worst piece of self-abasement was the Riom trial, in which the Vichy Government decided to judge the "war criminals"—the politicians "responsible for the war." Bonnet was to appear as chief witness for the prosecution. Georges Bonnet was going to produce evidence not only against Mandel, but also against Daladier who had kept him in office for years, against his better judgment. Hitler, who had protested for years against the "war guilt lie" in the Treaty of Versailles, could only rub his hands at the sight of the French accusing their own politicians of having started the war. In 1919 the Germans had carefully refrained from trying their own "war criminals"; and to them the Riom trials were, indeed, a pleasing demonstration of France's lack of national solidarity—a solidarity which they themselves possessed in an extraordinary degree, even at the worst moments.

From a French internal point of view, Riom was intended to provide the unhappy people of France

## EPILOGUE

with so many scapegoats; with mud instead of bread.

But what are the feelings of the French people? There is everything to suggest that they are wretchedly unhappy, both in their bodies and in their souls. They are being robbed and despoiled of everything by the Germans; and M. Déat's theories about the New Order must be cold comfort to them. Already in August Déat bitterly complained of the Anglomania which, he said, was still widespread in France—Anglomania being the hope—in M. Déat's view, the idle hope—for a British victory over Germany. Whatever their past grievances against England, however deep the anger widely caused in France by the Oran battle, very many people in France realize that if France's soul can still be saved, it can be only through the defeat of Germany. And, as the battle is raging over the South of England, I am convinced that most French men and women are hoping for a British victory. I remember Madame Charpentier on the Quai Voltaire, saying: "After the English, it will be our turn to be eaten up." And to be eaten up more thoroughly even than France has already been eaten up. Vichy is not yet the final and ultimate *Vernichtung* of France which Hitler prophesied in *Mein Kampf*. Vichy is only the half-way house to final annihilation. If England is destroyed, then the annihilation of France will also be final and complete. France's only hope of becoming a great independent civilization again and perhaps of surviving at all is in England's triumph over the dark force of Nazi conquest. The "Anglomaniacs" whom M. Déat despises are the only people in France who have



## THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS

any instinct of self-preservation left. A few more months of German rule may turn the whole of France into Anglomaniacs. If it does not, then one can only console oneself with the Chekhovian hope that "in three hundred years life may become infinitely beautiful." But it would be cold comfort for us.



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